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P L U S

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- John Carpenter pays another visit to THE VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED

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I N S I D E

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DEPARTMENTS

8 **Letters** Readers speak out on their *Generations*.

12 **Newscape** Denzel Washington catches a computer virus.

62 **Trekscape** Should Capt. Kirk have helmed *Yesterday's Enterprise*?

66 **Moviescape** Desperate for attention, Charlie Sheen visits the White House.

70 **Videoscape** Jim Cameron tells *Lies*; Jack Nicholson runs with the wolves.

74 **TVscape** *Alien Nation* once again invades the Fox network.

78 **Printscape** The original *Star Wars* and its two successors are back—in print.

80 **Gamescape** *MTV's Club Dead* offers in-your-face virtual sleuthing.

FEATURES

18 **Bond On the Run** Pierce Brosnan finally gets the call as the 30-year-old James Bond franchise struggles to survive in post-Cold War Hollywood.

24 **Hollywood's Double Take** Ancillary media such as video and laser disc allow ambitious filmmakers to offer their work unsullied by commercial pressures. But are movie fans benefiting from this creative revolution?

34 **Ocean of Dreams** The $100-plus million *Waterworld* pulls into port this summer. But Universal isn't sure if anyone will show up at the dock.

36 **Cries and Whispers** Troubling rumors wing out from the set of *Batman Forever*, though director Joel Schumacher doesn't seem to be worried.

38 **Lost Childhood** John Carpenter returns to his childhood haunts for a remake of the 1960 science-fiction/horror classic, *Village of the Damned*.

42 **Hit or Miss** Charlotte Lewis faces off with Peter Weller and Robert Patrick in the upcoming high-tech mountain adventure, *Decoy*.

46 **Unearthly Experiences** Motion-control models, passé in the age of digital technology, manage to find a home on *Earth 2*.

52 **High Rollers** To hit it big in Tinseltown, you've got to take some risks. And even for established stars, it's always a roll of the dice.

58 **He's All Ears** The third time is the charm for actor Tim Russ as the longtime *Star Trek* aficionado becomes *Voyager's* resident Vulcan.

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EDITORIAL

CONTROL ARTISTS: Steven Spielberg, the late Orson Welles and James Cameron

When Francois Truffaut laid out his auteur theory in the pages of the French film journal *Cashiers Du Cinema* in 1954, it had the impact of an artistic Emancipation Proclamation. Long fettered by a studio system that trivialized their talent, Hollywood filmmakers embraced the scholarly validation of their craft. And as the power of studios slowly declined over the next decade, independent-minded directors like Stanley Kubrick and Francis Coppola enthusiastically sought control of their work.

The results, alas, have been mixed. Observing the first wave of auteurs in the early 1960s, British drama critic Kenneth Tynan said: "In the modern cinema, the director's star is absurdly and dangerously dominant." The inevitable outcome, he felt, would be movies "blighted by uncritical self-indulgence."

Tynan's views on the subject weren't original. The early Hollywood moguls also feared such self-indulgence (though their fears were motivated primarily by their pocketbooks), leading to a system in which tasks were rigidly compartmentalized and the director was simply an employee who had to follow orders. Filmmakers like Orson Welles who fought for a larger measure of artistic control were tarred as radicals and financial risks—and their films, if they could find work, were molded by penny-dumb producers and salivating studio editors.

But whereas Welles and his colleagues in the 1940s and '50s had no recourse, today's filmmakers do (see cover story, page 24). Now directors can, to appease the studio, compromise their work for theatrical distribution, then restore it for release on video or laser disc—or even for re-release in theaters. On the whole, this is a positive development—offering directors artistic control, studios another revenue outlet and audiences more choices.

But all good things have their limits. A movie, after all, is a piece of history, representative of its time and era. Thus, it can be argued that adding scenes to and improving the special effects of *Star Wars*, as George Lucas is doing, removes the '70s classic from its proper place in the filmic timeline and distorts its original creative influence on its sci-fi successors. On the other hand, a strong argument has been made that Lucas is right to take advantage of the new digital technology to perfect a work that has become one of the most prominent cultural signposts of the late 20th century.

The lines simply aren't as easily drawn here as they are, for instance, in the debate about colorization. It's difficult to argue against restoring David Lean's *Lawrence of Arabia* or James Cameron's *Aliens*—especially once you've seen the magnificence of those special editions. But could Francois Truffaut have conceived of *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*? fans squinting at their TV sets and fiddling with their laser-disc players, trying to find the renegade frames that show Jessica Rabbit flouncing about sans underwear?

—Douglas Perry
Managing Editor

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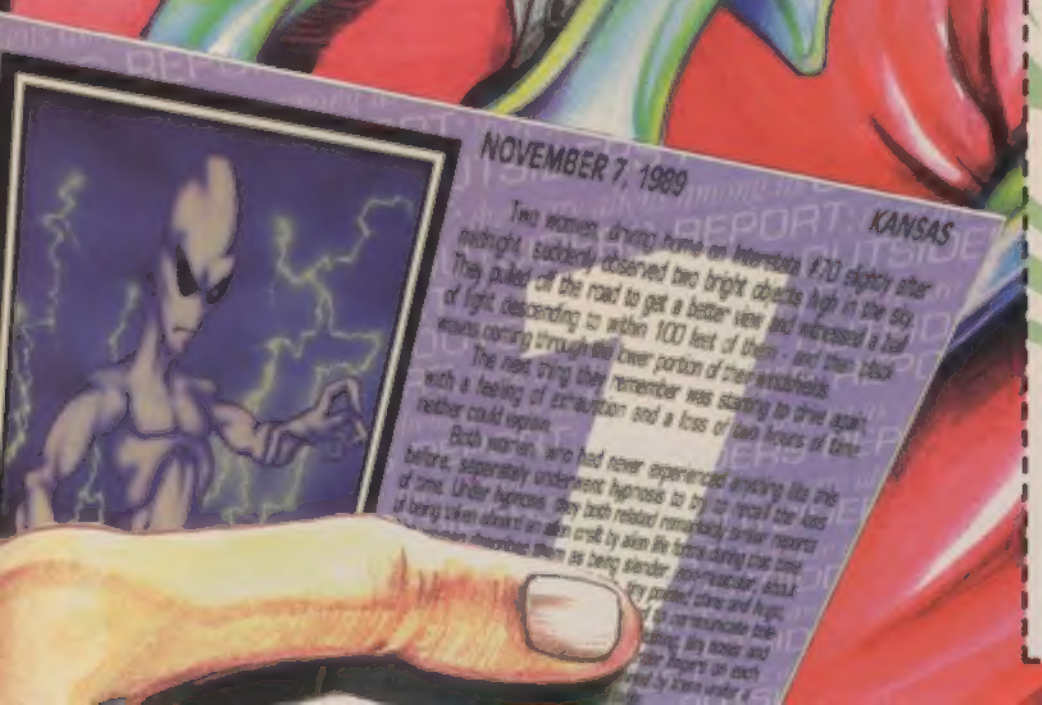

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L E T T E R S

Generations Hex

I wish I could say that *Star Trek: Generations* was great all around, but it was only half-great. How can a film start out so strongly and end on such a weak note? It did have strong points: the beginning sequence with the Enterprise-B, the crash of the Enterprise-D and Brent Spiner's performance as Data.

However, there are some things that bothered me. For example, why did Kirk have to die? More importantly, why did he die falling off a bridge? That was the great sacrifice they told us about? Give me a break! Killing Kirk is bad enough, but he deserves to go out with a bang, not falling off a bridge.

Second, the last sequence on the desert planet was dull. Kirk and Picard stop Soran from firing a rocket—that should have lasted five minutes, but it was stretched out beyond belief. It also seemed like Picard was useless—he did nothing against Soran, except get knocked around.

Wait, I'm not done! I found two inconsistencies in the film:

1. In the *TNG* episode "Relics," Scotty assumed that Kirk had come to his rescue. How can he have assumed that when he thought Kirk had died getting sucked out of Deck 15?

2. When Picard returns from the Nexus to try to stop Soran a second time, there should have been two Picards there.

Perhaps I'm nitpicking: *Generations* was enjoyable, but I can understand Leonard Nimoy's reservations about the script. Next time, the writers should take more time with the story—the ending left me disappointed.

BILL GORDON
ORLANDO, FL

I'm writing to share some thoughts on the new *Star Trek* movie, *Generations*. Overall, I enjoyed the film and I welcome the *Next Generation* cast to the big screen. I was impressed with the emotion Patrick Stewart conveyed in the death of Picard's relatives, and I enjoyed watching Brent Spiner bring Data's latest struggle with emotion to life.

Nonetheless, I was disappointed with the way that Kirk's death was handled in *Generations*. None of us dispute that death is a constant we'll all experience, but *Star Trek* indulges us with the chance to imagine what it would be like to "bend the rules." From my point of view, *Generations* didn't give us flexibility with Kirk's death. Unlike Spock in *The Wrath of Khan*, the tone of Kirk's demise was final. I left the movie with a gnawing sadness that none of us will ever again enjoy Kirk's presence on the screen.

As I see it, the death was also inconsistent with Kirk's heritage. Perhaps more than any other character, Kirk has had the capability and good fortune to find a way to beat the odds in the end, if not at present, then in the future. The death scene did dignify Kirk's valiant sacrifice, but missed the main point for me: I'd like Kirk, even on a limited basis, to continue to "make a difference" in the unfolding *Star Trek* adventure.

CHARLES PROUDFIT
CINCINNATI, OH

Alien Creation

I was sitting here reading my new issue of *CINESCAPE*, and the thought occurred to me that this is the first time I actually have read a magazine from cover to cover. Your magazine is great!

I especially wanted to read this issue because of the article on *Alien 4*. Even when *Alien 3* was in production, you could never find out anything about the movie. I am pleased to hear that Sigourney Weaver might be coming back as Ripley. I had written to another magazine after the release of *Alien 3* and told them the entire movie should be written off as a dream in hypersleep. I am pleased to hear that that may be the case. I also hope Ridley Scott can return as director of the film—assuredly we would all be pleased (and scared out of our wits) when watching *Alien 4* at the theater!

BEN SMITH
LEXINGTON, KY

I am a teenager. Like most teenagers, I like movies and comics. My favorite movie and comic series happen to be the *Alien* and *Predator* series. My absolute favorite comic book is *Alien vs. Predator*.

In early 1992 I heard a rumor that Twentieth Century Fox had purchased a script for an *Aliens vs. Predator* movie. Months later, I read a disappointing article titled *Aliens vs. Predator—The Movie You Will Never See*. A friend told me he heard the movie would cost more than $100 million and Fox didn't think it was worth it. Another friend said that only die-hard comic nerds like me would pay seven bucks to see it. But I disagreed by saying that Fox is already making *Alien* and *Predator* toys and action figures, which do well with kids. If they made a cartoon to go along with the toys, video games and comics, they would have enough support to make a movie.

But kids would be a huge portion of the people going to see it at the theaters. All three *Alien* and both *Predator* movies were rated *R*, and I assume *Aliens vs. Predator* would also be an *R* movie. This presents a problem—if the movie is targeted at kids, will the movie be toned down to *PG-13*? That happened recently with *Jurassic Park*, which was disappointing. I had read the book and it was a hundred times better than the movie.

CHRIS BRINGHURST
FAIRBANKS, AK

Dreddful

Stallone as Judge Dredd? Sorry, I just don't buy it. Having read the comic for a few years, I just can't imagine Sly using his great range of acting ability to pull off the dark and brooding Dredd.

As for video game movies, well, why not? It seems that every year they turn a movie into a *really* bad video game. Why not vice versa? Let's hope not. I guess Hollywood keeps forgetting that stars alone (i.e., Van Damme as Guile, Raul Julia as M. Bison) will not carry a picture. After all, who cares to remember one of the worst—*The Last Action Hero*? Maybe now that movie budgets are going through the roof, studio execs should consider that when a movie is truly bad, no star, no matter how big, will be able to carry it. Who were Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher or even Harrison Ford before 1977? Before they blow the wad on star power, they should consider if the script is really worth making and whether it would work on its own.

Then again, history has proven that studio execs are pretty close-minded to new ideas. How many studios rejected George Lucas before Twentieth Century Fox gave him the green light?

Louis A. Rocha
Riverside, CA

Close Kombat

With *Mortal Kombat* and *Street Fighter* on the cinematic horizon, there is a slight cause for alarm. Despite the failure of *The Beverly Hillbillies* and *Car 54, Where Are You?*, movie executives—buoyed by the success of *The Fugitive*—are trying to make movies based on old TV shows. For every flop like *The Shadow* or *Popeye*, there is still the chance of a *Batman* or *Superman*.

My point is that there has yet to be a successful film based on a video game. *Tron*, *The Last Starfighter*, *Super Mario Bros.* and most recently *Double Dragon* have all come and gone like a novice at Killer Instinct. You have more of a chance at success when it's the other way around and they make the games from the movies.

Yet my hopes are still high. From what I've seen of the *Street Fighter* and *Mortal Kombat* movies, the set designs and some of the costumes look fabulous. Hopefully, the final word on both movies will not be GAME OVER.

Willie Holmes
Chicago, IL

X-travaganza

What do you know? I was doing some *X-Files* shopping and I saw your magazine. The big "X" on the cover page in the bookshelf said, "Buy me" and so I did! Luckily I got the last copy! Thank you very much for the story on *The X-Files*! Not only do all my friends go to one house to watch *The X-Files*, each one of us tape the same episode at home!

Till next month, *CINESCAPE*! I'll be out collecting X-traordinary *X-Files* merchandising X-travagansas! *X-Files* posters, toothpaste, Mulder and Scully dolls, gummy aliens....

Tina Shioji
Riverside, CA

Thank you for an extremely pleasurable and informative article on *The X-Files*. I am an avid fan and hope that this season can equal, if not better, last season's performance. Hopefully, the show's imaginative storyline, inventive dialogue, which is packed with insightful cultural references and superior acting, will cause others to join the bandwagon of *The X-Files*' fan club.

Angelica Aguilar
El Paso, TX

GENERATIONS GAPS

CINESCAPE takes a logical look at *Generations*

Being one of the most eagerly-awaited films of the year, it's not surprising that *Star Trek: Generations* quickly soared into warp speed at the box office. The on-screen teaming of Captains Kirk and Picard, however, didn't prevent the editors of *CINESCAPE* from noticing some inconsistencies big enough to fly a Death Star through, including:

What Happened: The crew of the Enterprise-B rescues the El-Aurian refugees, including Guinan and Dr. Soran, from the Nexus.
What Really Happened: Umm, is it just us, or did they forget to explain how the El-Aurians were snatched away from the Nexus? If the Enterprise-B was aware of transports carrying the refugees, then how did the transports get caught in the Nexus in the first place?

What Happened: The Enterprise-B captain tentatively attempts to rescue El-Aurians caught in the Nexus.
What Would Have Happened: Nothing. Star Fleet would never put someone so mind-numbingly stupid in command of the fleet's flagship. Even the auto-pilot could have done better than he did.

What Happened: Soran destroys a solar system to change the direction of the Nexus so that it will pluck him off the surface of Veridian 3, killing 230 million people in the process.
What Would Have Happened: Soran would have simply asked the Enterprise to approach the energy ribbon so he could transport into the Nexus. No stars imploding, no Klingon battles, no Enterprise crashing. No Kirk either. Who knows, it might have been a better movie.

What Happened: Picard and Kirk confront Soran on Veridian 3.
What Would Have Happened: Kirk would have returned to the 23rd century to greet Scotty and Chekov on the bridge and retain his title as the Captain Who Cheats Death the Most. Picard, meanwhile, would have returned to Ten Forward and, with Worf and Riker in tow, arrests Soran on the spot—thereby relieving moviegoers from having to watch the overly tedious ending a second time.

What Happened: The Enterprise-D saucer section separates and crashes on Veridian 3, sustaining minor casualties.
What Would Have Happened: Wanton carnage as the saucer plows 100 miles through evergreen forests. The resulting investigation by Star Fleet finally gives someone the bright idea to install seat belts and leave the kids at home.

What Happened: Picard and Riker sift through the wreckage of the Enterprise, searching for Picard's family album.
What Would Have Happened: Picard, livid over the destruction of his ship, refuses to be reassigned with Riker and has him shipped out to Deep Space Nine.

What Happened: Picard finds an echo of Guinan in the Nexus, who instructs him to locate Kirk and stop Soran.
What May Happen: *Star Trek VIII—The Search For Kirk's Echo.*

LETTERS

I loved your story on *The X-Files* and would like to know the address for fan mail for the show.

I liked the fact that the story was 12 pages long, not just a page or two like in most other mags. Please tell Edward Gross that I would like another story about "behind the scenes" on *The X-Files*. Maybe some more killer photos, too.

Keep up the X-cellent work! You've got a great magazine.

GRANT H. WARRICK
EUGENE, OR

Mail for The X-Files *should be sent to:* Twentieth Century Fox TV, 10201 West Pico Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90035.—*Ed.*

Carrey On

I am a really big fan of Jim Carrey. I am interested in getting his picture and his autograph. I would appreciate any help you could give me in achieving this goal.

CHRISSY POSTON
GULFPORT, MS

Mail for Jim Carrey should be sent to: United Talent Agency, 9560 Wilshire Blvd, Beverly Hills, CA 90211.—*Ed.*

Now *Voyager*

I am writing a letter in response to Amer Al-Hilal's comments on the upcoming *Star Trek: Voyager* series in issue number two of your wonderful publication. I am not uncomfortable in telling you that after reading Al-Hilal's letter, I was positively stunned. I am simply amazed that Al-Hilal has the gumption to call himself an avid Trekker.

Every one of Al-Hilal's comments attack the very foundations of what *Star Trek* is about and what Gene Roddenberry created 30 years ago.

First, Al-Hilal states that he would prefer *Voyager* to be set in a period of galactic war. That in itself is a contradiction of everything that Gene Roddenberry ever wanted *Star Trek* to be. To paraphrase Mr. Roddenberry, he once said that many people complained there were not enough space battles in *Star Trek*. He responded by saying forget them, that's not what *Star Trek* is about.

The "political correctness" of *Star Trek* was also attacked, as well as its optimism. In case Al-Hilal has been in suspended animation for a few decades, he should know it was *Star Trek's* original feeling of optimism and hope about the future that led to the show being revamped as movies at all. Realistic drama is based on conflict, yes. However, that conflict does not have to take place in the middle of a galactic war or some kind of massive destruction.

Probably the most shocking part of Al-Hilal's letter is his resistance against the idea that "we are all brothers and should learn to live together." The world of the 1960s when the original *Star Trek* gained an audience was one of troubles. It was one where *Star Trek* fans could watch a show where people were willing to cooperate and live together. In the 1990s, we still live in an age of racism, destruction, crime and sickness. I find it sad that anyone, especially a fan of *Star Trek*, would actually want to see those qualities projected onto a future that has always been one of hope and optimism.

True, it can be argued that *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* is already a dark and conflicting view of the future. However, if one watches the show carefully, one can see the blaring difference between *DS9* and past *Star Trek* shows. Both Classic *Trek* and *The Next Generation* involved crews of starships who helped to establish relations with other races and begin the settling of conflicts. However, it is officers like Commander Sisko and his crew who must build upon the foundations established by captains such as Kirk and Picard. In *DS9* we see Federation officers working in the rough environments that space is bound to offer while maintaining the ideals of Starfleet and the Federation.

As for the future of *Star Trek* and what it stands for, since *Voyager* will be set away from the Federation and Starfleet, it will be interesting to see how the crew of the Voyager uphold the ideals and standards of the human race and the Federation without any overseeing authority. It will also be very interesting to see how the conflicting Maquis and Federation officers manage to cooperate with each other.

Star Trek has always offered a future where people can overcome hatreds, jealousies and harsh conditions to work together. It is a future I would not mind being part of. Al-Hilal's idea of the future is one of strife, destruction and conflict. If that's what he wants, *Terminator 1* and 2 are the films for him. As for *Star Trek*, I'll keep the positive messages. Our world needs them.

BENSON GREGORY YEE
BROOKLYN, NY

Planetary Fall out

You guys are doing a great job, but you did make one small error in your December issue. It was stated that Oliver Stone would be directing *The Planet of the Apes* remake. However, he is one of the producers. With as much info as you guys put out, the job you're doing is amazing.

DEREK BROOKS
WILLIAMSBURG, VA

You are right; Stone is serving as executive producer of the film. Thanks.—Ed.

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LATE-BREAKING NEWS ON MOVIES, TELEVISION & MORE

Virtual Blockbuster

Washington plays cops and cyber-robbers in Virtuosity

It's an age-old premise. What if the genie escaped the bottle? That scenario, updated with 1990s' technology, drives the plot of *Virtuosity*, a thriller starring Denzel Washington that began filming in January.

Embracing the dramatic potential of the computer revolution, the film takes the possibilities of virtual reality to an intriguing end. What if something created in VR could get out? In the script by Eric Bernt (*Surviving the Game*), an evil digital criminal created as a training tool for police officers breaks out of its computer confines to wreak havoc in the real world. Washington plays the cop who trained against the computer simulation and then must use what he's learned to hunt down the virtual villain.

Michael Douglas (*Basic Instinct*, *Disclosure*) had reportedly expressed interest in the part, but Washington nailed the role after hitting it off with *Virtuosity*'s director, Brett Leonard, who helmed the similarly futuristic cyberadventure *Lawnmower Man*.

Following star turns in such hits as *The Pelican Brief* and *Philadelphia*, Washington has become a hot item. The actor is also starring in Tony Scott's deep-sea thriller *Crimson Tide* (a role Brad Pitt reportedly sought

in the film, which is set for an early summer release. Gene Hackman and Washington play a U.S. Navy submarine captain and his second-in-command respectively, who must deal with a mutiny as well as with ambiguous orders to fire on Russian military targets.

Washington should find filming in the virtual world a bit more stable than the shooting of *Crimson Tide*. Many scenes for that film were shot atop massive structures that rocked the entire sub sets to and fro.

Washington won an Oscar for 1989's *Glory*, but his more recent work in *Philadelphia* and *The Pelican Brief* put him on Hollywood's A-list. He'll reportedly get $7 million for *Virtuosity*, up from the $6 million he got for *Crimson Tide*. ◆

Lumet tackles *Football*

Man with the Football, director Sidney Lumet's latest film, is not running back Barry Sanders. The title actually refers to the defense department attache who follows the President wherever he goes, carrying the nuclear "football"—the briefcase that holds the top-secret codes that could start a nuclear war.

Screenwriter John Pogue says the idea for a film about the football being stolen by a government insider arose from the popular misconception that there is "one finger on the button."

"We have the illusion that that power is safely and securely under control, but history has proven that it's bigger than us," he says. In the script, a defense department scientist intercepts the football and manages to stay one step ahead of panicked White House officials.

The rogue scientist, who's dying of the cancer he got while working on nuclear weaponry, wants to "teach the country a lesson it will never forget," according to Pogue.

No word on who may play the scientist, but Andy Garcia (*Godfather III*) is reportedly in the running to play the lead investigator.

Pogue has become one of Hollywood's hot writers; his latest script, *The Damocles Network*, recently sold for more than $500,000 after less than 10 hours on the market.

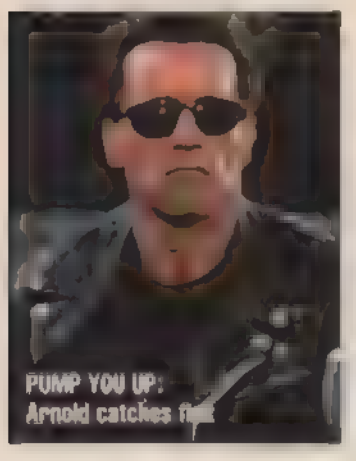
The network in the film's title refers to a string of spy satellites that have the capability to "read what's on the page of a newspaper someone's reading in a cafe," not to mention the ability to target individuals for summary execution, says Pogue. An analyst discovers an illicit plot to use the network for criminal purposes, setting off a chain of murderous events. ◆

Schwarzenegger wimps out?

Arnold is a wimp because he's afraid to do his own stunts, says Hong Kong action star Jackie Chan. Chan, Asia's premier movie hero, has broken 20 bones jumping from speeding cars and leaping off buildings. "I don't use stuntmen," he told the Asian newspaper *Eastern Express*. In *True Lies*, Schwarzenegger relied on stuntmen and computers. Very few scenes were real.

Chan declared that he "can truthfully and proudly say that my stunts[] are all real. Some people may say I'm stupid, but I'm the real hero."

Arnold might want to get back into hero mode himself, since his holiday release, the comedy *Junior*, performed wimpishly at the box office. As for future projects, the Austrian colossus is said to be considering Oliver Stone's *Planet of the Apes* remake and a retread of the 1935 Errol Flynn swashbuckler *Captain Blood*. He's also still on a personal *Crusade* as well, trying to get funding for the medieval epic that [illegible] Pictures dumped. ◆



LUCAS MAY HELM NEW TRILOGY

So [illegible] Lucas may finally get behind the camera again to direct the new *Star Wars* films. "I'll take a year to write them, a [illegible] work as a writer and producer in recent years, added that he hasn't decided whether or not he will [illegible] decide after I get the films prepared," he said.

[illegible] time since *Star Wars* in 1977 (he previously helmed *THX 1138* and *American Graffiti*). Making all three of the new films at once, [illegible] shooting of the two *Back to the Future* sequels.

To say that the new *Star Wars* trilogy is highly sought-after may be the Hollywood understatement of the millennium. Rumor has it that the only reason Universal Pictures made Lucas' idiosyncratic *Radioland Murders* was to butter up the filmmaker. Other studios vying to release the flicks are the new "Dream Team" enterprise [illegible] pal Steven Spielberg, and Twentieth Century [illegible] coming *Star Wars* special edition.

TREK STARS BEAM UP PAY RAISES

Brent Spiner doesn't need an emotion chip to feel happy—he and Patrick Stewart, unlike their fellow *Next Generation* cast members, did not ink multipicture deals with Paramount when they signed on to do *Star Trek: Generations*. That means that when the eighth big-screen *Trek* adventure gets under way, the studio will have to cough up a substantial paycheck for the stars or do without Capt. Picard and Lt. Cmdr. Data, an unlikely scenario given the huge success of *Generations* and the two characters' critical roles in it. The next *Trek* flick is already tentatively set for a fall 1996 release, though the project—lacking a script and a director—is only in the talking stage.

But Stewart, at least, has no reason to rush into negotiations with the studio. The actor, who came to Gene Roddenberry's universe from Britain's prestigious Royal Shakespeare Company, recently bagged $100,000 for three hours of conference calls he did with William Shatner. *Trek* fans paid $100 each for the privilege of listening and asking questions. Shatner was actually the more enterprising captain: as a partner in the company that set up the chats, he logged a bigger payday than Stewart.

[ON A RIGHT-WING AGENDA]

SOMETHING FISHY?
seaQuest DSV

[When House Majority Leader Newt ... gets home from a tough day of legislating the Republican agenda, what video might he curl up with? *The Fountain Head*? Nah, he's already committed that one to memory. Try *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, according to William F. Buckley's *National Review*. He ... "conservative" movies of all time because it "shows the dangers of mass conformity and tyranny" posed by a "benefactual" government. *Ghostbusters* also ... nod from the magazine for demonstrating how an EPA official ... mindless enforcement of the rules ... a fearsome plan ... to escape and wreak havoc on New York.

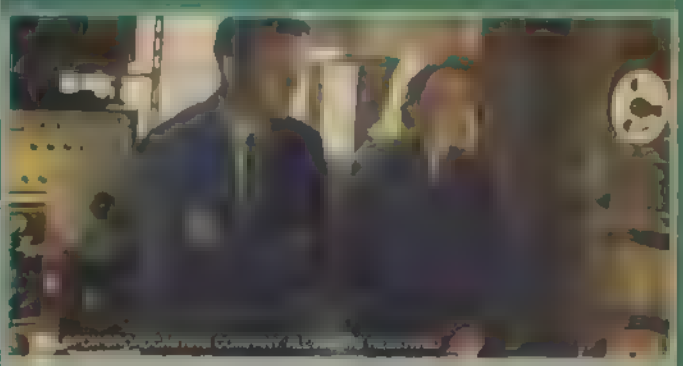
But *National Review*'s playful list isn't the only place for the new majority to find viewing tips ... and warnings about TV shows ...

Research Center, a Virginia-based think tank. The MRC ... issued its own guide to "acceptable" ... fare, ... patrons to steer clear of programs like *seaQuest DSV* ... policies enacted by the Reagan Administration have been criticized for wreaking havoc on the citizenry at 20,000') and *M.A.N.T.I.S.* ('Several ... menacing forces in America society ...

The X-Files, ... the popular syndicated drama that examines the ...

... MRC's red light ... attacks traditional values and conservative views.

... creators may take some comfort from the fact that they're joined in MRC's no-no category by such popular programs as *Roseanne*, *Melrose Place*, *The Simpsons* ... *Murphy Brown*.



THE TRUTH CHOMPS ARE OUT THERE
The X-Files' Mulder and Scully face conservative opposition

Romancing Sharon Stone

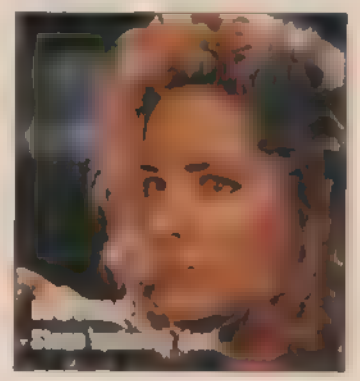
While most film stars flee from stereotyping, Sharon Stone embraces her screen persona in a death grip. After playing murderesses in such films as *Basic Instinct* and *The Specialist*, the actress will now star ... American version of the 1955 French thriller *Diabolique*.

The 1955 original, starring Simone Signoret, is a classic of the genre, in which a cheating husband is murdered by his mistress—with help from his wife. Or is he?

After poisoning and drowning the husband, a callous and cruel teacher, the fatal femmes are confronted with increasing evidence that they may have botched the job. The pool in which the husband was drowned is drained, but no body is found. Then the teacher's students say they've seen him alive. In the original, directed by Henri-Georges Clouzot, the ... kept guessing about the husband's fate until the film's last few minutes.

Similarly, Stone kept the remake's producers guessing until the last minute, finally accepting the role after an apparent contract dispute was settled. Warner Bros. reportedly balked at paying the star's $6 million asking price, especially since two of her recent films, *Sliver* and *Intersection*, crashed at the box office. But then *The Specialist* pulled in more than $120 million, which seemed to open the studio's checkbook.

Stone's 1995 releases will also include the quirky, Sam Raimi-directed Western *The Quick and the Dead* and the death-row drama *Last Dance*. ◆



Kombat gets animated

How many different ways do you like your *Mortal Kombat*? If video games and a feature film don't satisfy your craving for the bloodthirsty action franchise, New Line Home Video is coming out with an animated *Mortal Kombat* feature next year. The straight-to-video release will precede the summer premiere of the live-action *Mortal Kombat* ... will showcase state-of-the-art 3-D and high-end capture technology, according to *Daily Variety*. Motion-capture technology is a technique in which electronic sensors attached to human actors relay movement information to a computer, which uses the information to create realistic, three-dimensional animation.

The technology has been used in video games and it will be on display in the forthcoming *Batman Forever*. But the *Mortal Kombat* video will mark the first time it's been used so extensively for a long-form animation release. ◆

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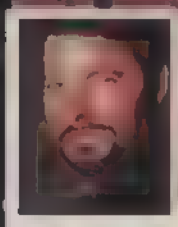
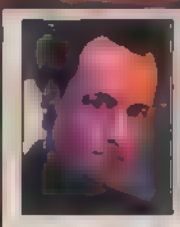


JONATHAN FRAKES

BRENT SPINER

MICHAEL DORN



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Sea Hunt rides the wave of TV shows going to the big screen

The latest television program to prove that old TV shows never die — they just come back to haunt multiplexes — is *Sea Hunt*, the swashbuckling ocean adventure series that ran from 1957 to 1961. The program, a sort of waterlogged *Murder, She Wrote*, starred Lloyd Bridges as Mike Nelson, an ex-Navy diver turned freelance underwater investigator.

The film [illegible] they may have Bridges strap on his goggles and fins again for a role in the film, though the star turn will go to a younger actor. And that may even be Bridges' movie star son Jeff, who recently starred in *Blown Away*.

Peter Benchley, who penned *Jaws* and *The Deep*, is writing the feature. He insists the movie won't just be a retread of the TV show.

THE HUNT CLUB: Bridges to the past

Benchley told *Variety*: "Mike Nelson is 60 and his time has passed, and the technology has outstripped him. I'm thinking of the first scene where he's saying how the sea can be a cruel, harsh mistress, and then you see he's doing a fish stick commercial."

Producer Debra Hill said the older Nelson will not be the typical action hero. "It's not really about machines or fireballs," she told *Variety*. "It's this savvy guy taking the ocean by the horns. Mike Nelson never strapped on an AK-47, he fought off eels with a screwdriver or something. It's low tech winning over high tech. He'll be matched against his kid who's from the new school believing that bigger is better, and eventually they come to a meeting of the minds."

After scaring a generation of swimmers out of the water with *Jaws*, Benchley says he's happy to be working on a film that promotes diving, his favorite hobby. "When they called me, I realized there has not been a well-crafted underwater diving movie since *The Deep*. I consider *The Abyss* more science fiction, and there hasn't been a movie that has used the underwater environment for a film."

No actors have been signed yet, but filming is set to begin in the Caribbean this spring. ◆

RIDING THE INSIDE TRACK

Director John McTiernan tapped recording artist Sam Phillips to play a terrorist named Katya in the next Die Hard film after seeing Phillips' picture on the cover of her latest album, Martinis and Bikinis.

For those who have missed seeing Joey Buttafuoco's kisser on the front page, you're in luck. The Long Island car repairman turned tabloid hero will be making his acting debut in Cul-de-Sac, a thriller currently shooting in New York state.

Rutger Hauer, whose most recent release was the quirky drama The Beans of Egypt, Maine, gets back into action with Mr. Stitch, the story of a genetic experiment gone awry.

Hollywood, which has been using comic books and video games as the inspiration for films and TV shows for some time, is now raiding the toy closet as well. A movie is in the works based on that bendable buddy of yore, Stretch Armstrong, and GI Joe will debut in a weekly series this fall as well as a possible feature. Movies based on the cartoon hero Ultraman and on Gumby are also on the drawing board.

Miramax opens *Box*

What will the art house crowd make of *Black Box*? The script for the airborne thriller was recently sold to Miramax Films, purveyor of such high brow films as *The Piano* and *The Crying Game*, for the decidedly commercial price of $500,000.

Miramax co-chairman Harvey Weinstein admitted to *The Hollywood Reporter* that the flying adventure flick is "a departure" from the studio's usual arty fare, but he added that *Black Box* "is such a smart take on the subject" that Miramax felt it had to jump in with a preemptive bid on the script.

The thriller follows the adventures of an airplane crash investigator who is obsessed by a fatal air disaster he cannot solve. The action really gets rolling when the investigator tries to stop the person he believes is responsible for the crash from sabotaging other planes.

"You read this script and it's so scary," Weinstein said. "It's like *Jaws* or *Speed* in the air.... If we do this right, it will be like *Jaws*."

Black Box was written by David Madsen, who also co-wrote the police thriller *Copycat*, now filming in San Francisco with Holly Hunter and Sigourney Weaver.

Black Box is not the only airborne suspense film in production. A similarly themed air-disaster script called *Pilot's Dawn* was recently sold to Twentieth Century Fox. With all this panic in the skies, can *Airport '95* be far behind? ◆

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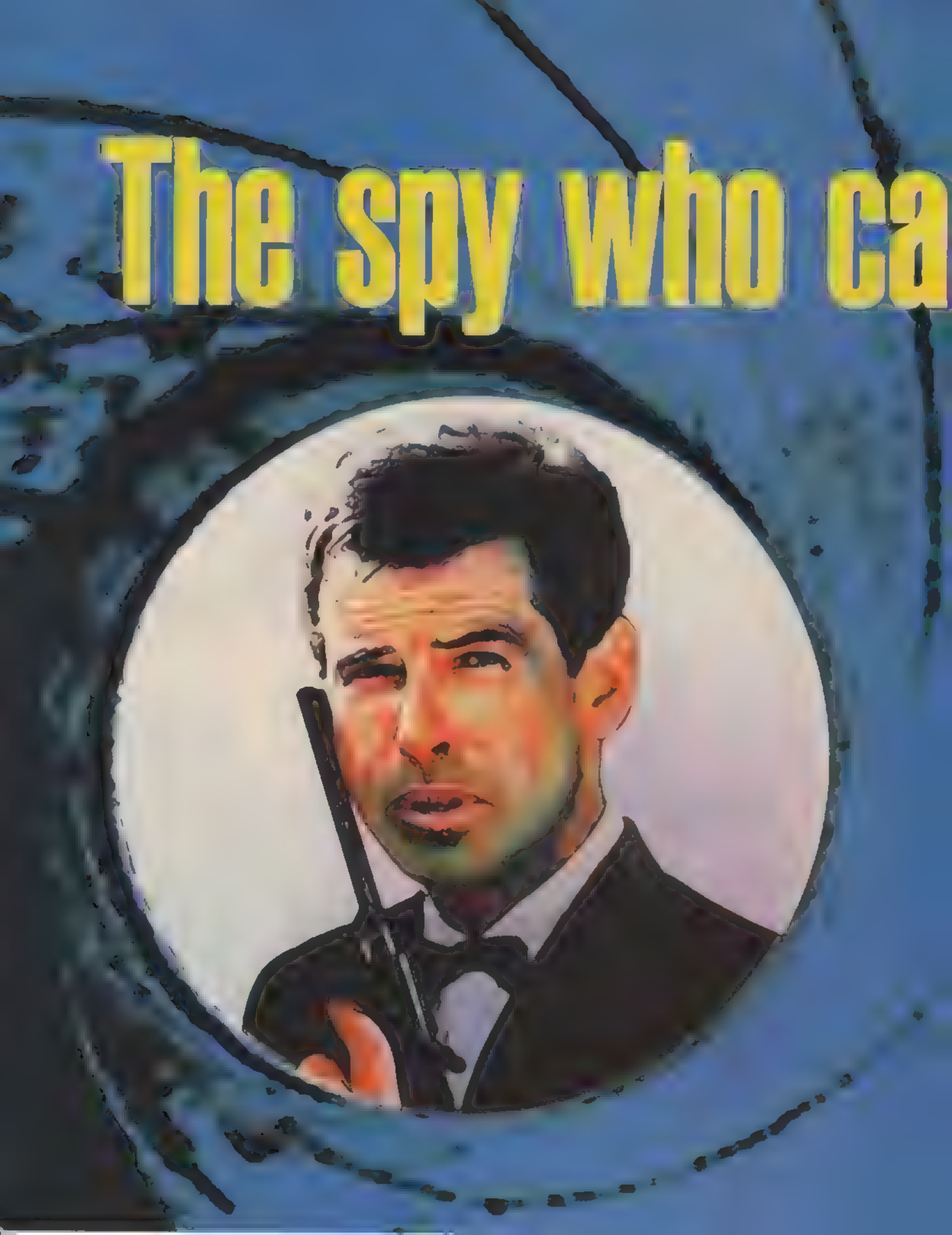

me in for the gold

Can Pierce Brosnan's *Goldeneye* save the legendary 007 from a forced retirement?

W

music, James [illegible] for film

[illegible] Hunt who also [illegible] editor second unit director and [illegible] the first six 007 adventures But while the [illegible] [illegible] conborn at the time of the group's breakup Bond has proven to be far less enduring

The quintessential man's man of the '60s James Bond is now largely viewed as a literary and filmic anachronism *Goldeneye* the 17th [illegible] not only must shear the [illegible] an act grown stale, it must meet the standard of a new and decidedly different [illegible] Since Bond's heyday in [illegible] has offered [illegible] fashioned [illegible] Blue-collar James Bond [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

kind of unique [illegible]. But they [illegible] typical [illegible] Bond.

That early B[illegible] of course, Sean Connery — and it's [illegible] character that [illegible] exactly. Connery's [illegible]

[illegible] Eastwood and others. [illegible] for [illegible] Vince Edwards and Harry Saltzman [illegible] the rights to [illegible] Bond, [illegible] to make Bond [illegible] more [illegible] Rolling Stones [illegible] of the [illegible] Bond [illegible] more [illegible] Bond [illegible].

[illegible] of *Dr. No* [illegible] and Broccoli [illegible] to do with [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

Goldfinger's top-notch quality, and Connery brought to what he considered the trivialization of the character.

"As to Bond the man," Connery said at the time of our interview, "we've lost the humanity of the character. We have to start with Bond as a man, because however original the gadgets are it's the human being with all his human frailties who has to overcome the obstacles, isn't it?"

But Bond the man, he felt, had been lost in the gadgetry and special effects so beloved by the series' new breed of producers who turned each new film into a Bond extravaganza. In the end, *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1969) was a rather serious cinematic effort with Bond—played by Australian actor George Lazenby—actually falling in love and getting married only to see his wife killed by Connery's Blofeld.

"I like to get a laugh for that," admits Hunt, who directed the film. "Nobody wanted an unhappy ending, but I wanted it."

OHMSS with the unknown Lazenby replacing the popular Connery, failed to ignite the box office, but it has emerged as a genre classic. Lazenby, however, walked away from the series following a dispute with the producers and has been loitering in obscurity ever since.

Connery returned for *Diamonds Are Forever* before bowing out once again (he would play Bond for the last time in 1983 in *Never Say Never Again*). Replacing him was Roger Moore, the star of the television series *The Saint*. After the stopgap *Live and Let Die* and *The Man With the Golden Gun*, Moore scored big with *The Spy Who Loved Me* in 1977, molding the Bond character in his own image. But his 007 was much different from Connery's, and his films soon filled up with over-the-top camp that upset the stomachs of Bond purists. Nonetheless, Moore's films proved box-office gusher[illegible].

"The Bond films have evolved over the years in a variety of ways," explains Michael Wilson, executive producer of the series. "But they've changed with the times. They went from being spy thrillers to action adventures, and their comedy went from being a rather cynical, sick humor to a comic's kind of humor. As far as our audience was concerned, *Moonraker* (1979) was the most popular one. But it was our feeling that we couldn't go any further in that direction.

"I think we reached a peak with *Octopussy* (1983), which was very outrageous," Roger Moore has said. "What we were trying to do in that one was 'look what you've been seeing these movies for 22 years and they are ridiculous,' so we went too far with it. Moore's own swan song was *A View to a Kill* (1985), which was saddled with a [illegible] discussed by both the critics and the audience.

Shortly before the seventh Bond writer Richard Maibaum [illegible] over the years. "The first one was in 1962," said Maibaum, "and you could be more [illegible] opportunity to project a fuller characterization of the people. Now you have to move so fast [illegible] only way you can forge a characterization is by dialogue and give and take. No time for it today, and I think that has gradually happened over the years to all action pictures. It certainly has [illegible]."

"I think we got a little too hard on *View to a Kill*," admits Michael Wilson. "We had a lot of things in that one that [illegible] and detonators [illegible]. Not everyone's going to like every film, but I was happy with it. I think it's a good Bond film. I think it's one of the best Bond films. I wanted to see [illegible] and to make it [illegible] and we did. I like that film a lot."

Seeking to avoid [illegible] to rejuvenate Bond, [illegible] with [illegible] *The Living Daylights* [illegible] Timothy Dalton [illegible] Boston was to be [illegible] to [illegible] but NBC [illegible] renewal [illegible] *Remington Steele* [illegible] the Bond [illegible] [illegible] publicity [illegible] publicity plot for a television series and let Brosnan [illegible].

"I wanted to be Bond ever [illegible] Bond, I was [illegible] TV people wanted me and the [illegible]

Timothy Dalton, a classically trained [illegible] and who had also appeared in [illegible] *The Lion in Winter*, brought a realism and intensity to the role that had not been evident since Connery. "When I got the part, I knew his Fleming. His second appearance was in *Licence to Kill* (1989), in which Bond for the first time, pursued a personal vendetta.

"*Licence to Kill* is a film that really intrigued me [illegible] books and those early [illegible]

Bond's Golden Age: Connery in his prime.

THE NEW BOND GIRL: Model Famke Janssen

BOND VOYAGE: Timothy Dalton, late of the miniseries *Scarlett*, sailed out of the Bond series after only two outings.

story to make the villains more threatening, the characterizations richer and the narrative more 'intensely' dramatic. Also being batted around are ways to bring Bond back to basics, to give new audiences his background instead of assuming they know the secret agent's history.

This suits Brosnan fine. The actor, whose credits include *Lawnmower Man* and *Mrs Doubtfire*, enthuses, "It's time to clean the slate and start again. I hope to explore some of the demons inside of James Bond. I'm going to try and update him psychologically. In this film, the stakes have gone up for Bond in the sense that it's a personal betrayal on behalf of the bad guy within the movie.

"There are certain parameters you have to adhere to," he adds. "But this is a Bond for the 1990s. Martin Campbell is a wonderful filmmaker, and with his sensibilities we're really going to try and push the envelope on this and shake it up. This is nothing against Roger [Moore] and his interpretation, which is very valid. But for me, Sean Connery was James Bond. He had a killer instinct. There was a certain ruthlessness and an edge to the character that has been lacking, mixed in with the humor and getting the woman. I think the element of danger would have to be brought back. I think you'd have to go [illegible] to the beginning and find what Ian Fleming put on paper."

Goldeneye, remember, is where it all began. ◆

Dissecting

the Director's Cut

Hollywood's top filmmakers are restoring and re-envisioning their works—and remaking movie history

by Douglas Perry and Dean Lamanna

Following a test screening of *Pat Garrett & Billy the Kid* in 1973, Sam Peckinpah sat crablike in his MGM office staring at the floor. "They've taken it away from me," the filmmaker glumly told his nephew. "They're recutting it right now." MGM's editors, working grueling shifts to meet the studio's release deadline, made a mess of the film—rendering it indefensible. Yet one reviewer who could only admire a few "pretty scenes" of that botched release had quite a different take upon seeing the restored version years later. "I was in tears by the end of it," he said. "That's the darkest film I've ever seen."

Can a few random snips of celluloid really make the difference between pap and pure gold? With the growing popularity of both independent filmmaking and the director-based auteur theory, filmmakers answer with a resounding yes. In the medium's inherent battle between artistry and commerce, the power has shifted gradually over the last 20 years from the money handlers to moviemakers—the best and brightest of whom have broken the studios' shackles to form their own powerful production entities. The result is an air of creative euphoria that's pervading Hollywood like never before, and a growing desire on the part of directors to have absolute control.

But even though directors have far more power now than they did in the studio days of yore, nitpicky executives still try to maintain a tight rein and don't shy from demanding changes—particularly after investing $50-100 million in a project. The chief difference today is that filmmakers are no longer forced to accept a studio mandate as the final word. Through prior contractual arrangement, they sometimes can preserve the original version—repairing any damage wrought by excessive test-screening and editing—with what has become known as the director's cut.

Filmmakers "are simply sick and tired of everybody messing with their work," says Stuart Fischoff, a media psychology professor at California State University, Los Angeles. "The director who can rerelease his version of a film] is attempting to redress the imbalance from when he or she lost control because of the studio."

Typically these new versions have appeared letterboxed on videocassette or laser disc after their theatrical release. Now with the recent, critically heralded release of Ridley Scott's retooled *Blade Runner* and George Lucas' planned revamping of *Star Wars*, some are even finding their way into theaters. But beyond aesthetics, the reason behind the revisions also can be shrewdly commercial—exploiting the public's desire to see what it missed by putting a new wrapper on an old product. Perhaps the most egregious example of this was the 1980 theatrical release of *Close Encounters of the Third Kind: The Special Edition*, which did little more than add a few minutes of less-than-astonishing FX.

This revisionist movement eventually will create headaches for film scholars. Fischoff says, "The problem is one of authentication. What is the real work? In 25 years, the notion of a work of art being a singular and true vision is going to be lost. Concepts like 'pictures don't lie' will be invalid."

[illegible]: Cameron's [illegible] Ripley's maternal instincts on the editing room floor

[illegible] Writer-director James Cameron is widely [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

Jorden, whose infection by the alien parasites lead to the decimation of the whole colony—with the sole exception of the Jordens' young daughter, Newt.

Next, Cameron axed all references to Ripley's daughter. Much the same way that the missing Jorden footage diminishes the viewer's emotional connection with the enigmatic Newt, the removal of Ripley's daughter obfuscates the otherwise hard-assed warrant officer's obsession with saving the young colonist—making it almost as mystifying as her self-endangering efforts to rescue the itinerant feline at the climax of *Alien*. The missing exposition is not only important to deepening Ripley's sense of personal redemption, it's crucial to establishing the feminine and maternal qualities that eluded her in the earlier film—and to torquing up the tension in her confrontation with that other tough mother, the alien queen.

Though he was pleased to retrieve the subplots for the laser-disc version, Cameron accepted the cuts in the theatrical release as a necessary commercial concession. "I felt at the time that *Aliens* was the best possible theatrical-release story I could tell," he said when the expanded laser-disc version debuted. "The economic realities of feature film exhibition ... demand that a commercial film not exceed two hours.... *Aliens* pushed the envelope with its [final] release length of two hours and 17 minutes, and I was grateful to Twentieth Century Fox for supporting the film at that running time."

DEEPENING THE ABYSS

Fox was less generous with the writer-director's 1989 underwater epic, *The Abyss*. Cameron, perhaps learning from his experience on *Aliens*, opted this time to lose more action than story—dropping a fantastic FX denouement in favor of fleshing out the relationship of combative marrieds Bud and Lindsey Brigman (Ed Harris and Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio), which he felt was the heart of the film.

The first cut, an overlong and unwieldy dramatic tapestry that interwove the main character plot with a Byzantine adventure involving a sunken nuclear submarine and submerged aliens, made the studio very antsy. Concerned about its investment, which had escalated from $21.5 million to $45 million, Fox conducted a test screening two months before the movie's scheduled July 1989 release with a makeshift soundtrack and card inserts explaining missing FX. Despite the film's work-in-progress condition, the audience's response was generally positive—with the biggest complaint centering on its overall sluggishness.

Post-screening, Cameron snipped away background information on some of the secondary characters and the intricate operations of the undersea oil-drilling rig, Deepcore, where most of the action occurs. He also chose to scale back the aliens' appearances as a means of heightening tension and saving running time. Yet a second test screening convinced him that the cursory tightening would not be enough, and a bigger sacrifice would have to be made: the partly completed, $3.5 million FX climax featuring a mountainous tsunami generated by the extraterrestrials as a warning to humanity. The intrepid director decided that trawling the emotions of the Brigmans would have more dramatic impact than a sky-high wall of water.

The non-extraterrestrial half of the double-helix plot finds Deepcore's "Tool Pusher" Bud and his estranged wife leading a team of Navy SEALs in an effort to rescue or salvage a crippled, nuclear missile-laden U.S. submarine that has settled onto a ledge 2,000 feet beneath the Caribbean. When a conflict develops between Deepcore's crew and the out-of-control SEAL leader, a chase in motorized submersibles ensues and the Brigmans find themselves trapped in their leaking craft with only one diving suit between them. Lindsey makes Bud, the more powerful swimmer, take the suit—trusting that he can carry her back to Deepcore before she drowns.

The wrenching content of the scene and the powerful performances of Harris and Mastrantonio made it relatively easy for Cameron to favor it over the big wave sequence. "When Lindsey elects to drown and Bud subsequently wills her back to life," he once explained, "the film reaches a level of emotional intensity beyond anything I had done before.... In cutting away a subplot that was primarily visual and conceptual, I felt that I was able to preserve what was important about the film. I lost the nuclear-disarmament theme as a clear agenda ... but I felt that it was still implicit, though now operating on a symbolic level."

The loss of the apocalyptic eye-popper, which was initially one of the project's selling points, may have tripped some alarms at Fox. The studio—quite rightfully, in light of the millions at stake—was expecting an underwater *Star Wars*, not a subsea *Love Story*. Still, even without the Industrial Light and Magic-generated wave, Cameron did his best to deliver both. "It is undeniable that these cuts did more than just shorten the film," he has said. "They substantially changed its tone and, more importantly, its content. The original goal ... was to tell a story of a kind of apocalypse in which we are judged by a superior race and found to be worthy of salva-

COMBATIVE: Cameron carried without his alien tidal wave in the big-screen version of *The Abyss*.

tion.... The restoration of this part of the film [on laser disc], despite my early misgivings, has proven to be quite satisfactory. With years of perspective now on the film, I see a new movie—one that seems whole on all levels."

RESTAGING STAR WARS

If anyone has years of perspective on his work, it's George Lucas. It has been nearly two decades since *Star Wars*, his last directing effort and the one that allowed him to "retire" into mini-moguldom. But Lucas, like his peers, is no longer content to rest on his megahit laurels. Last November, the prolific film and television producer and founder of Industrial Light and Magic announced that on May 25, 1997—exactly 20 years to the day

Pvt. [illegible] has an unfortunate colonist girl-wrapped

ALIENS: Back to the Future

James Cameron valiantly battled to keep his epic 1986 sequel *Aliens* intact, finally turning to laser disc to offer his complete cut. And ironically, Cameron's film prospered in part because of what Ridley Scott willingly cut out of his original. During the early stages of preproduction for *Aliens*, Cameron acquired H.R. Giger's original drawings of the egg, the face hugger, the chest burster and the alien warrior. The alien life cycle had been established in the first film: The creature begins [illegible] gin, which springs out and attaches itself to [illegible] embryo that grows into a parasite. The parasite emerges in a spectacularly bloody fashion and metamorphoses quickly into an adult. Not established: The adult alien cocoons victims, depositing them within alien larvae that consume the hosts slowly and transform them into pods, or eggs. That missing stage in the alien's life cycle, filmed but removed by Scott, gave Cameron the freedom to breed 'em.

"Had that [concept of cocooning] existed in the first film, my story wouldn't have worked," Cameron has said. "In my story, the eggs came from [a queen]. I focused on the idea of a hierarchical hive structure where the central figure is a giant queen whose role it is to further the species."

With Giger unavailable, Cameron turned to Academy Award-winner Stan Winston to create his remarkably fertile 15-foot queen alien. "We tried to be as true to the original film as we could," said Winston, "without disallowing ourselves a little bit of artistic freedom..."

[illegible] atement. —*John Elvin*

after his FX-filled space opera whizzed [illegible] and whooshed its way into the public's imagination, [illegible] present his director's cut of the re-[illegible] science fiction classic. The history-jumbling twist: Rather than simply returning footage cut from the [illegible] plans to drape new technology that would give his 1970s cultural landmark an unmistakably 1990s feel.

Said the director: "The digital technology that ILM pioneered in films like *Jurassic Park* and *Forrest Gump* allows me to revise a few scenes which bring the movie closer to my original vision." His plans include adding or enhancing key sequences outside the famous cantina and in the Tatooine Dunes [illegible]. New shots of digitally realized creatures, vehicles and droids are expected to be integrated.

"The digital technology that ILM pioneered in films like *Jurassic Park* and *Forrest Gump* allows me to revise a few scenes which bring the movie closer to my original vision."

—George Lucas on his plans for *Star Wars*

[illegible] with [illegible] previously unedited [illegible] new snipped sequences [illegible] allow him to enhance the [illegible] of the digitally altered *Star Wars* [illegible] the original theatrical release. [illegible] I want everyone to re-experience the film with the added benefit of today's motion-picture sound advances.

Of the scenes likely to be added to the movie, the restoration of a lopped confrontation between Han Solo and Jabba the Hutt (who didn't make his first appearance until six years later in *Return of the Jedi*) has received the most attention. As originally scripted and filmed, Solo runs into a humanoid Jabba after being hired as a taxi driver by Luke and Ben Kenobi. After Jabba bickers with Solo over why the maverick pilot dumped a shipment he was carrying for the intergalactic black marketeer, the scruffy glutton agrees to give Han a chance to repay him for the lost cargo.

Han, my boy, I'm only doing this because you're the best and I need you, Jabba says. "But if you disappoint me again I'll put a price on your head so large that you won't be able to go near a civilized system again for the rest of your life."

I'll pay you, Jabba," says Han. "But not because you threaten me. I'll pay you because it's my pleasure.

Although Lucasfilm would neither confirm nor deny it before *CINESCAPE* went to press, it is widely assumed that Lucas plans to composite the original footage of Harrison Ford with a new, CG version of the outsized, banana-slug Jabba as he appeared in *Jedi*.

Another scene rumored to be making its first appearance occurs early in the narrative when Luke is still on Tatooine working on his

JABBA REDUX: The original [illegible] partly space pirate, not used in *Star Wars*' theatrical release, may get a digital facelift in the remake

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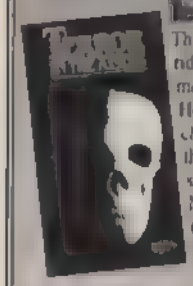

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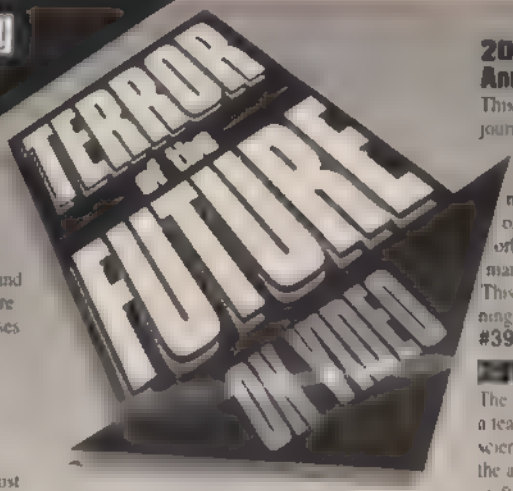

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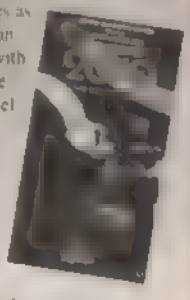

The human adventure continues as a team of Russian and American scientists fly to a rendezvous with the abandoned Discovery space craft. Their mission is to unravel the mystery that culminated in Dave Bowman's last transmission: "My God, it's full of stars!" (Color)

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Fahrenheit 451

Ray Bradbury's best-selling Sci-Fi masterpiece about a future without books takes on a chillingly realistic dimension in this film classic directed by one of the most important screen innovators of all time, Francois Truffaut. (Color)

This film has a powerful emotional impact – Life Magazine

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What would happen if another planet were on an intercept course with Earth? If you guessed tidal waves, earthquakes and wholesale [illegible] you would be right. But what if Earth could [illegible] spaceship full of people just in time to escape destruction and preserve our race? If you think that would make a thrilling and unforgettable science-fiction adventure you would be right again. Released in 1951, *When Worlds Collide* is a disaster film of cosmic proportions that won an Academy Award for Best Visual Effects. (Color)

#7386 (82 minutes) $19.98

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From John Wyndham's novel of the same name comes this chilling movie about a meteor shower that blinds most of Earth's population. The meteors also bring alien plant spores that quickly grow into mobile, carnivorous plants that have a taste for human flesh. (Color)

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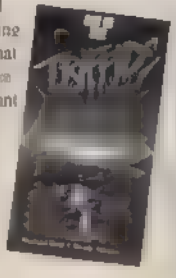

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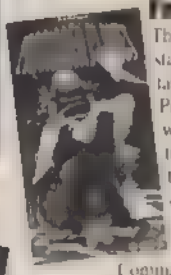

The year is 2257 A.D. The distant star Altair IV has three lone inhabitants: Professor Morbius (Walter Pidgeon), a [illegible] who has created a world of futuristic marvels; his daughter Altaira (Anne Francis), a bewitching innocent who has lived her whole life in this realm of splendors; and their servant Robby the Robot. Commander Adams (Leslie Nielsen) landing of Earth's space cruiser on this planetary paradise sparks a spine-chilling, flamboyant adventure, fantasy with romance, humor and suspense, which speeds to a fiery climax. (Color)

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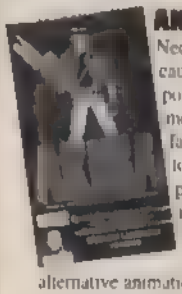
AKIRA



Neo Tokyo is a modern post-holocaust metropolis at the bursting point. Civil unrest, rebellious motorcycle gangs and scientific fanaticism have pushed the city to the limit, but a mysterious psychic force known as *AKIRA* is about to bring total devastation. This is one of the finest examples of contemporary alternative animation currently available in the United States. (Color)

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uncle's farm. Using high-powered binoculars, the teenager discovers signs of a battle [illegible] above the planet. While spreading the word about the space fight, he encounters an older pal, Biggs Darklighter. Biggs dismisses Luke's story about the battle, saying, "I keep telling you, the Rebellion's a long way from here. I doubt if the Empire would even fight to keep this system. Believe me, Luke, this planet is a big hunk of nothing."

Biggs goes on to admit, however, that he plans to join that distant rumble. "I'm not going to wait for the Empire to draft me into service," he says. "The Rebellion is spreading and I want to be on the side I believe in."

"And I'm stuck here on Tatooine," Luke replies sadly.

This scene, in which B[illegible] Luke's [illegible] Biggs believes everyone is going to end up a poor land tenant within "the greater glory of the Empire," establishes Luke's idealism and conflicting emotions. He feels that his uncle [illegible]s help, but he is also determined to [illegible]me for a life of adventure. [illegible] announcement of his plans, of [illegible] by great enthusi-

ism—particularly by the series' home studio, Twentieth Century Fox. "It's a distribution and marketing dream," said Senior Executive Vice President Tom Sherak, stating the obvious. Fox chairman Peter Chernin added, "We wanted to give the new generation of children—and their parents—the chance to experience *Star Wars* on the big screen. The 20th anniversary year seemed the perfect time."

NEEDLESS ENCOUNTERS

The same year that *Star Wars* blasted across movie screens, George Lucas' friend, Steven Spielberg, joined the science-fiction revolution with *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. Told through the eyes of Everyman Roy Neary (Richard Dreyfuss), CE3K—unlike virtually every previous sci-fi film on the subject—depicted humanity's first extraterrestrial contact as a communicative, rather than a combative, experience.

The movie struck a primal chord in the public—and the releasing studio, Columbia Pictures, made its desire for a follow-up plain. Yet Spielberg—at that time dead-set against the burgeoning sequel trend—resisted. As a compromise, he told Columbia he would revise CE3K, which some critics knocked for its meandering midsection. The result, released in theaters in 1980, was *Close Encounters of the Third Kind: The Special Edition*. This new version, the impetus for which was solely commercial, made a mockery of the initial auteur concept of a director's cut.

Spielberg did not have any significant character exposition or valuable subplot material to return. For the most part, he simply edited down a few second-act sequences that he felt were too long and reinserted some brief outtakes. Then, he created a shot that augmented the opening, in which 1940s-era planes are discovered in the middle of the Gobi Desert: This time, the archaeologists find an old ocean freighter protruding from the dunes as well.

What Columbia vainly hoped would be the big draw were the sequences added to the ending. As originally lensed, the film concluded with Roy Neary being led by the aliens to the hatchway of the mother ship, ready to depart for the stars. In the *Special Edition*, we see what Neary sees as he enters the massive

vessel—a towering rotunda filled with vague, jostling figures and blinking lights.

The added footage packed all the wonderment of a neighborhood Christmas display. In the end, Roy Neary's fantastic voyage—despite John Williams' tinkly, Alice-in-Wonderland accompaniment to the scene—was best left to the imagination.

FINE-TUNING STAR TREK

Thanks to *Star Wars* and *CE3K*, sci-fi fever spread quickly in the late '70s. Creative temperatures especially soared at Paramount Pictures, which had been trying for years to launch a new television series based on its venerable *Star Trek*. In fact, the TV project, called simply *Star Trek II*, was already in preproduction when George Lucas turned the industry on its ear. Gene Roddenberry's timeless saga was about to blast across the little screen once again when, literally one week prior to the commencement of principal photography, the studio—convinced that the intergalactic gravy train would stop for it, too—pulled the plug on the show and transformed it into *Star Trek—The Motion Picture*.

While *Star Wars* helped bring the big-screen project to life, it also shifted the focus away from what has made *Star Trek* so enduring: its characters. Virtually gaga over the visual razzmatazz of rival Fox's futuristic gold mine, Paramount decided at the outset that flash and fanfare would be *ST—TMP*'s driving forces, leaving the kinetic interaction between Kirk, Spock and McCoy to the old series reruns. Rushed into production without a finished script, the production—with veteran director Robert Wise (*The Day the Earth Stood Still, The Andromeda Strain*) at the helm—quickly became an FX-strewn, $44 million debacle.

The plot, seemingly a pastiche of several series episodes, had one of NASA's Voyager space probes (identifying itself as "V'ger") achieving consciousness and returning to Earth to seek its creator—destroying "carbon-based infestations" (i.e., human beings) en route. Alas, those infestations had little else to do but become toast anyway. The actors spent inordinate amounts of time staring wide-eyed at viewscreens and twinkling FX.

In 1980, Gene Roddenberry said in an interview that he felt *ST—TMP* was a first-rate effort accomplished under difficult circumstances. "You strive for different values

SUNGLASSES AT NIGHT? In the revised *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, the [illegible] is filled with vague figures

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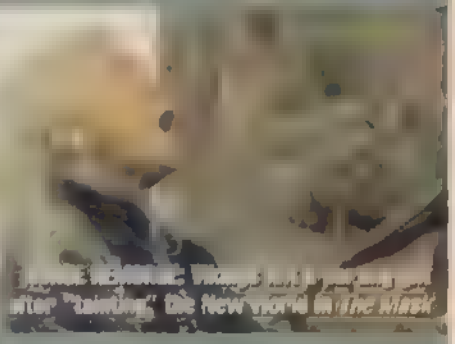
Dollar Signs Behind The MASK

H



[illegible] after "landing," the New York in *The Mask*

As originally shot, *Star Trek Generations* opened with James T. Kirk continuing his battle with mortality. But rather than deal with aging by purchasing a sports car or dating a woman half his age, he copes with the situation as best an ex-cosmic cowboy can—by engaging in the extreme sport of space-diving.

Frustrated that he's no longer strutting across the universe, the retired captain attempts to prove he's still potent by strapping on a heat-resistant parachute, leaping through Earth's stratosphere and landing on a predesignated target. Following that stunt, he plans to perform one that's even more Olympian: a triple planetary orbit, ending with a meteoric plunge to the surface.

"Kirk was parachuting out of orbital skydiving into a hay field and landing undignified," explains director David Carson. "Scotty ran along behind him saying, 'What

are you doing? You are too old to be doing this sort of thing'—which is very much like how some of the old movies started."

The sequence, though it appeared on *Entertainment Tonight*, was cut at the last moment. Relative to the, er, gravity of later plot developments, Carson suggests that the introduction was too light. "I said to Bill [Shatner], 'The point about this movie is *not* that you are going off to do deeds of daring for two hour

Carson is happier with the film's current jumping-off point. "The fist time you see Capt. Kirk on the Enterprise B, he is Capt. Kirk. He is a hero. That space-diving stuff would have taken the edge off of that."

And it might have taken the edge off Paramount's concurrent release, *Drop Zone*, which featured Wesley Snipes doing the same thing—from far less lofty heights.

—*Edward Gross*

ILLOGICAL DECISION?
FX replaced crew interaction in
Star Trek—The Motion Picture

n television," he explained. "It's a more intimate medium, where you can get into multiple characters and character conflict that can be very exciting. With motion pictures the trend has been to make it a sensory experience, with stereo sound and bigger screen because ... the directors of today are creating

The Trouble With Tribbles," the first half of *ST—TMP* had barely enough character interplay to sustain fan loyalty. "The problem is that the cut is wrong. They left in the special effects sequences that should have been much shorter and Robert Wise intended them to be much shorter.... If you pick up

[redacted]

that illusion that the audience is actually there. Television cannot create that illusion. It intellectualizes rather than 'sensorizes' the product."

Roddenberry nevertheless lamented the studio's wholesale hacking of the film's dialogue scenes. "Many of the things that made this script different were, bit by bit, sliced out of the movie," he said. "They were the 'talky' things. The personal stories were excised."

According to science-fiction author David Gerrold, who penned the original series script

Star Trek—The Motion Picture Special Edition you'll see that most of the character things have been returned to the movie. That edition [at 143 minutes] is 12 minutes longer but it feels 12 minutes shorter because of the character stuff."

Indeed, the movie finally comes to life as the characters get more opportunities to play off of one another. The celluloid nuggets run the gamut, including Uhura's chastising of an alien ensign critical of Kirk's command, Sulu's sexual arousal over a

comely lieutenant and Kirk's musing that McCoy's reluctance to have his molecules scrambled in the transporter "has a familiar ring to it."

Also restored were scenes critical to exposing the motivations of Mr. Spock. In the home stretch to the film's climax, Spock mind-melds with V'ger and discovers that—unlike the film's plot—it represents pure logic. Afterward, as the Enterprise prepares to vaporize the unruly uber-Voyager, the normally stoic Vulcan sheds a tear in a truly momentous moment.

"For us?" asks Kirk, surprised.

"No, Captain," he responds. "For V'ger. I weep for V'ger as I would for a brother. As I was when I came aboard, so is V'ger now. Empty. Incomplete. Searching. Logic and knowledge are not enough."

Clearly frustrated by the whole affair, Robert Wise offered a half-hearted excuse for that lapse and others. "It was the first film that I did where I didn't have time," he said. "Normally we would see a picture and go back and have time to work on it a little bit more."

Thanks to good, old-fashioned commerce and the advent of ancillary media, Wise and other directors have been given that chance to revise their work—altering the course of *Star Trek* and, to be certain, many cinematic journeys yet to come. ◆

Additional reporting by John Flynn and Ed Gross

Waterfall

Can Kevin Costner's *Waterworld* survive its production woes?

By Beth Laski

Variety ©1994

The word on *Waterworld* is that, after an extremely bumpy start, history's most expensive movie is finally under control. As 1994 drew to a close, shooting wrapped in Hawaii and shifted to the safer waters of Los Angeles. So studio executives and the film's production team should begin to relax, right?

Wrong.

Ask anyone at Universal Pictures or any of the movie's producers about the aquatic adventure movie, which is set for a summer release, and the response you get is somewhere between petulant and paranoid. It looks like it's going to be some time before any of the participants recover from this epic production.

Reports of difficulties began with the script by Peter Rader and David Twohy, with star Kevin Costner and director Kevin Reynolds (*Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*) reportedly involved in rewrites. Scribe Joss Whedon, who punched up *Speed*, also spent several weeks on the Hawaiian set to polish up the script.

The principal set, docked at the Kawaihae Harbor on the Western coast of the Big Island, is a massive man-made atoll measuring a quarter-mile in circumference and made of 1,000 tons of steel. The film takes place entirely on water and is set in a post-apocalyptic future in which the polar ice caps have melted and the Earth is submerged. The elaborate atoll was towed out to sea daily and used for the film's many battle scenes.

The logistical difficulties of shooting on the water can be blamed for many of the production's problems, sources said. "Getting used to working on the water was not easy. There was a big learning curve, but that was not taken into consideration," said one.

With the studio cranky about the ballooning budget and wild reports of steak and lobster dinners being served nightly on the set, there is clearly intense pressure on Costner and Reynolds. In addition to starring in, producing and rewriting *Waterworld*, Costner is also dealing with a pending divorce and dodging paparazzi seeking to record his every move. At the same time, he may be running interference—as he has been known to do in the past—for his friend Reynolds, who has been described as rigid and intractable in dealing with studio pressures.

Key executives have scoffed at widely circulated reports that the budget has swollen to between $130 million and $150 million, but Universal has refused to release its own estimate of the cost of completing the picture. Sources estimate each day of filming on location in Hawaii cost the studio $300,000.

The making of the film has been a great financial expense for the studio, and it has taken a personal toll on some of the crew members—leading to some out-of-control behavior. The stress of the long days and months of filming away from home and family has led to what some hotel staff and local bartenders describe as a frat-house atmosphere surrounding the production, complete with barroom fights and crew members streaking through the hotel.

"Look, we work hard during the day and party hard at night," said one crew member. "When you're basically stranded on an island, what else should you do?" The embattled Costner, however, has received nothing but praise from Hawaiians for his low-key but active generosity toward the local community.

Yet for the most part, crew members were hostile toward reporters, a situation exacerbated by the tabloid press, which blew into town offering payment for interviews and camped outside the rented homes of the film's stars, who include Dennis Hopper and Jeanne Tripplehorn. Those close to the production said they believe the negative attitude toward the press, which has included threatening behavior toward on-location reporters, is justified because the filmmakers and some of the crew feel they are being harassed by the media. Some even describe an overwhelming sense among those involved with the film that someone in Hollywood has it in for the movie and its makers.

"We are in a defensive and very difficult position, having spent more money on this movie than any other," said one studio source.

But the makers of *Waterworld* say they'll rely on the finished product as their defense.

"What you'll see is something that's never before been done," said one source close to the production. "It's truly a spectacular undertaking." ◆

HUSH

ANXIETY

As *BATMAN FOREVER* prepares to swoop in for its summer roost, reports of conflict, change and—Holy Bat-thief!—real-life crime have escaped the heavily cloaked set. Here's an update on the latest goings-on in Gotham City

by Frieda Noone

It wasn't quite the crime of the century. But in Hollywood, it was akin to a violation of Fort Knox when 81 storyboards from *Batman Forever* were swiped from Building 34 on the Warner Bros. lot last August. "It's not like we lost the 'Mona Lisa,'" said director Joel Schumacher of the brazen theft, which prompted an internal investigation at the studio. "It's like losing the napkins you drew an idea on the night before." Nevertheless, it was an egregious security breach for Warner, which has always closely guarded its movie secrets. (The studio is so obsessive on this point, in fact, that when those in possession of scripts for the latest feature about the Dark Knight receive revised pages, they must promptly turn the old ones in.)

Bad karma of any sort is verboten when it comes to the making of *Batman Forever*. Edgy execs are praying that the third time's the charm for the ongoing saga, which sagged considerably with the leaden, less-than-stratospheric *Batman Returns*. But while Warner's all-out attempt to preserve the new film's surprises for this summer's moviegoers is noble, it has served to fuel the type of feverish hype and speculation that worked against the second installment. And despite the studio's best efforts, the production's largest set—constructed inside the giant, dome-shaped Long Beach, CA, airplane hangar that once housed Howard Hughes' Spruce Goose—hasn't been completely airtight: In November, stories leaked out of a clash of performance styles between Method actor Kilmer and manic actor Jim Carrey, who plays the Riddler.

Schumacher, who—unlike Tim Burton—has never been known as a shrinking violet when it comes to handling the press, quickly came to his stars' rescue. "Believe me, it didn't happen—the scandal is that there is no scandal!" the director said. "Carrey is just the sweetest person in the world and Kilmer is also a great guy. This cast is nothing but class."

Indeed, if the film fails, it won't be for a lack of clever casting. With Chris O'Donnell (*Scent of a Woman*) sidling up to Batman as Robin and Tommy Lee Jones (*The Fugitive*, *Cobb*) double-mugging everyone in sight as Harvey "Two-Face" Dent, there's star power to spare. (Nicole Kidman, thanks to duds like *Malice* and *Far and Away*, is still an unknown quantity as the comely Dr. Chase Meridan.) Anticipation rose further in October with the announcement that erstwhile *E.T.* bait Drew Barrymore and *Goodfellas* gangster squeeze Debi Mazar had joined the cast as Two Face's tantalizing molls, Sugar and Spice. And, as if those lissome additions weren't enough, Schumacher has seen fit to spice the film's tasty celebrity mix further with offbeat cameos—reportedly ranging from the red-haired comic Carrot Top and U2's Bono to Vermont's Democratic Sen. Patrick Leahy, an acknowledged Batfan.

Meanwhile, the film's 34-year-old lead has been busy shaping up for the title role. Val Kilmer, who sported a pot belly to play [illegible]ugh, ill-fated rocker Jim Morrison in Oliver Stone's 1991 biopic *The Doors*, appears determined to do away with the padded abs and pecs and fill out the Batsuit's sculpted musculature with his own. Toward that end, he's hired fitness guru-to-the-stars Tony Cortes, who transformed Linda Hamilton into a sinewy warrior for *Terminator 2*. "It's very important to Val, and to the production company, to keep him in good shape," Cortes has said. Along with intensive weight and aerobic training, Val no longer touches pizza, red meat or dessert foods.

Word has it that the character also will undergo some "plastic surgery" in the form of modifications to the superhero's costume. The one-piece, foam-latex cowl, which stiffened Michael Keaton's neck to such a degree that he resembled a whiplash victim in some action scenes, has reportedly been trimmed closer to the base of the neck—allowing Kilmer to turn his head and accomplish basic stunts, like running and jumping, with greater ease. The shorter cowl should also result in less wrinkling of the mask when these movements are performed.

Public expectations are running even higher than the full-size Bat Wing that will hang from the roof of the Bat Cave this time around. With cutting-edge visual and mechanical FX and pyrotechnics supplied by the likes of John Dykstra (*Star Wars*) and Tom Fisher (*True Lies*), *Batman Forever* would seem to have everything it needs to get off the ground and stay aloft for the warm-weather season. Yet ultimately, the film's success—and the long-term viability of the franchise—rests on the Cape-able shoulders of Val Kilmer and the confident commercial sensibilities of Joel Schumacher. It's a responsibility that would probably make two lesser men take flight. ◆

DAMNED AND DETERMINED

John Carpenter attempts to out-class a classic with his forthcoming remake of the sci-fi chiller, VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED

By Dean Lamanna

"Why do you do these dreadful things? Wherever it is you come from, you're part of us now. Couldn't you learn to live with us—and help us live with you?"

Thirty-five years ago, a trembling Barbara Shelley posed those pleading queries to a preternaturally precocious Martin Stephens, ostensibly her son and also the leader of a pack of malefic cherubs that turned a tiny British town into the *Village of the Damned*. Today, the kids still aren't all right—thanks to John Carpenter, who, in remaking the creepy science-fiction classic for release from Universal next fall, thinks the subject of quite-literally alienated youth is timelier than ever.

"It's basically about aliens landing, impregnating Earth women, and those Earth women giving birth to hybrids," says the 47-year-old writer-director-composer, slipping away from the editing room to discuss the estimated $17 million film, which stars Christopher Reeve and Linda Kozlowski as the distraught couple played by George Sanders and Shelley in the original. Kirstie Alley also stars as a scientist who studies the children.

Earth girls may indeed be easy, but it was the original film's otherworldly gamines that made a lasting impression on Carpenter. "I had a crush on one of those blonde-haired girls when I first saw the film in 1960," he recalls with a chuckle. "I wanted her to zap me anytime and take me someplace. But I enjoyed the film's classic science-fiction setup. It stayed with me."

So Carpenter was already primed when another big fan of *Village*, MCA motion picture chairman Tom Pollock, approached him with the prospect of a remake in late 1992. "It had been kicking around since Phil Kaufman's 1978 version of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and had gone through several directors and drafts," the director says. "I read the script that Wes Craven had been working on for a while, and I thought, *Well, no—it's not quite there.*"

But it was close enough for Carpenter to sign on, and he quickly set about revising the screenplay, going back to both the first film and its source, John Wyndham's 1957 novel *The Midwich Cuckoos*. "The old movie has a lot of interesting things to it," he says. "It was of course, a Cold War fable – it was made when you couldn't say 'pregnant' on the screen. The idea of a birth scene was a husband walking around nervously, with the doctor finally opening the door and saying, 'Well, don't worry about a thing. Your wife's going to be fine.' That's it. I knew I could do better."

For those not familiar with the original's action, *Village of the Damned* opens with an invisible cosmic phenomenon knocking the population of an isolated town unconscious. After the villagers awaken, it's soon discovered that the womenfolk (even the virgins) are pregnant. The births happen simultaneously, and following a series of weird incidents and deaths—all telepathically-induced by the new tots—the military determines that a case of the colic could very well touch off a cataclysm. Unchallenged, the blonde-haired and otherwise identical nippers rapidly mature from the terrible twos to the terrifying tens, threatening to join with others like them who have cropped up worldwide in a bid to turn Earth

into their global village

In Carpenter's update, the setting has been relocated from England to a small town in Northern California (actually Point Reyes which also served as the atmospheric locale for the director's 1980 chiller *The Fog*). "From there," he says, "it's a totally different movie in tone and intent, so I think a lot of people will see it as if for the first time. If they watch the old film, they'll get the idea. But special effects and the technology have come a long way."

The FX in Wolf Rilla's low-key, black-and-white 1960 version, which was filmed in six weeks on a budget of about $200,000, were limited mainly to the glowing eyes of the children in their homicidal mode—achieved through a simple positive-to-negative matte insert in postproduction. Carpenter, perhaps wary of the kind of critical guff he took for showcasing Rob Bottin's outrageous creations in his 1982 remake of *The Thing*, declines to describe how graphic the new FX will be—saying only that the visuals by ILM and the special makeup by KNB EFX (with which he last worked on *In The Mouth of Madness*) will contain some scary surprises. "It's classic science-fiction storytelling," he says. "And hopefully we can make it as eerie as [Rilla] did."

But wait a minute—this *is* John Carpenter. And this *is* the '90s. Let's try that again: Will *Village of the Damned* have much graphic mayhem? "Just graphic sex," Carpenter jokes, acknowledging: "It'll probably be more than the first one, but not too much." And just how high will the body count rise? "Now, now, now," he scolds. "Gee, not by much. Oops, I take that back. Yes—we up it quite a bit.

"There's a major action scene in the end where they're trying to subdue the children," continues the director, suddenly recalling his film's climax in which the crude bomb devised by the first film's George Sanders to off the ill-mannered urchins is upgraded to a megaton charge. "The highway patrol and the Army are sent in, but the children turn them against each other. It's quite a bloodbath—lots of explosions and so forth."

While the original's explosive resolution is retained in the new film, there are a variety of changes. These include a more definitive explanation for the somewhat less-than-immaculate conception and a sartorial makeover for the platinum-topped moppets, whose earlier "uniforms" of black boots and black overcoats probably caused nightmares in former parochial schoolers for years afterward. "We've done kind of a color approach to the children's wardrobe, but they still have a classic feel," Carpenter says. "You've got to remember that they're all of the same mind. And we have some amazing [child actors] in this movie."

The new kids on the block—there are 10 born in all, five of each gender—depart from the old in another significant way: One of them is more human than the others. "They're paired up, they're mated," says Carpenter. "So when one of the [female infants] dies at birth, one child is haunted by the memory. And he can't understand why there isn't someone for him. But we find out later what the dead one looks like, and there's a whole secret involving this. So you actually have a child who's worthy of saving, they're not all villainous."

Carpenter eschewed viewing other killer-kid movies like *The Brood* and *The Children* while prepping the film, preferring to stay inside the movie and book versions of *Village* as much as possible. "This story has so many specifics to it beyond those films," he says, citing a scene that he took directly from the novel. "The main human character is a theoretical physicist, and the main evil kid engages him in a discussion about the two species. It's unlike any scene I'd ever done before—unlike any I'd ever *seen* in a movie. You have this little 9-year-old talking to Christopher Reeve and I mean, they're kind of dueling about why each should let the other live."

So what, really, is the theme of *Village of the Damned*? Carpenter says the answer lies partly in the title of Wyndham's novel. *The Midwich Cuckoos* is "an analogy to the cuckoo laying its eggs in other birds' nests, and when the little babies are born they eat the other eggs," he explains. "It's about what happens when you find out that your children are sociopathic killers with no feelings—and they can control you. Well, look around. Open your blinds, look out in the street. That's all around us today. It's obvious. What is there about these children that's worth saving? What is there that makes them human? Is it empathy? What is it that some of these kids don't have out there? We explore all that."

When asked if the film might bear a subtle pro-choice message, Carpenter strangles a scream and takes the Lord's name in vain twice before calming sufficiently to respond. "Well, no, there isn't, really," he says with a weary laugh, checking his watch mentally and suddenly becoming eager to return to the editing room. "Hey, look, the basic story is: 'I was fucked by an alien from outer space.' You've just got to do it with some class." ◆

"I had a crush on one of those blonde-haired girls. I wanted her to zap me anytime and take me someplace."

—Carpenter on the 1960 original

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DEADLY allure

LETHAL LOOKER CHARLOTTE LEWIS MATCHES WITS—AND FIREPOWER—WITH INTELLIGENCE OPERATIVES PETER WELLER AND ROBERT PATRICK IN THE HIGH-TECH ACTIONER, DECOY

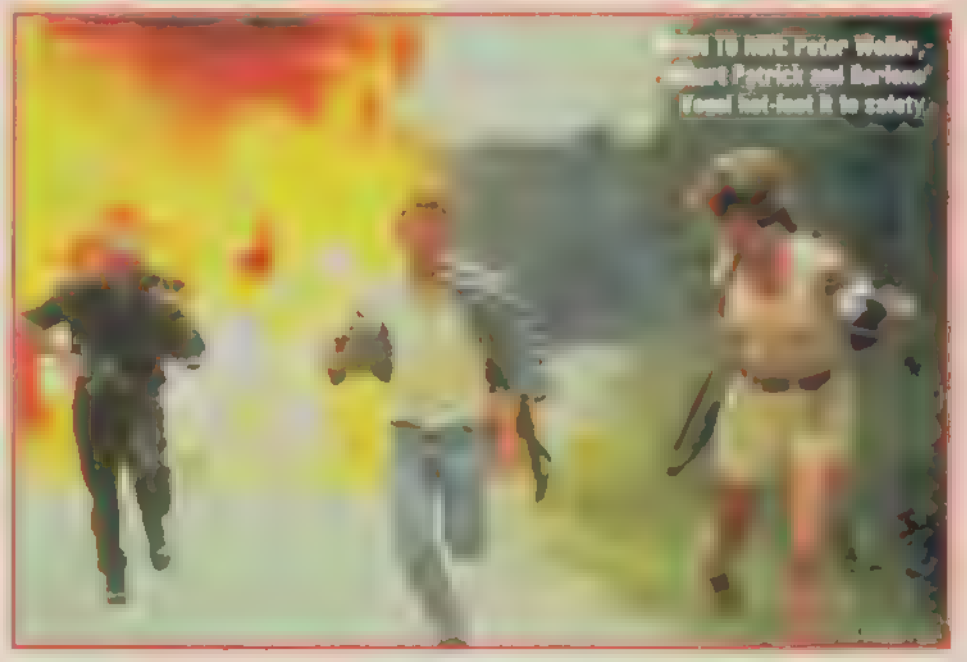
by dean lamanna

Surviving in the film business takes a certain killer instinct. And right now, actress Charlotte Lewis is contemplating the act of murder. "I could never kill anyone—I don't think," says the 27-year-old former model, who made her European film debut at 17 in Roman Polanski's *Pirates* and moved stateside in 1986 to star opposite Eddie Murphy in *The Golden Child*. More recent credits include *Storyville* and TV's *Seinfeld*. "If someone wanted to give me $100 million and said, 'Well, all you've got to do is just put this bit of arsenic in that soup,' I can't tell you what I'd do. Because I don't know. I'd like to think I'm a good person, I try to be. But I have a real side to me that's...slightly evil."

Lewis gets to indulge her evil side as Katya, a ruthless mercenary who tracks former intelligence operatives Peter Weller (*RoboCop*) and Robert Patrick (*Terminator 2: Judgment Day*) in *Decoy*, a cat-and-mouse action-adventure due out early this year. "She's a succubus—mercilessness is in her blood," Lewis says of the gun-toting Terminatrix, who's also a martial artist. "She's very, very strong. And that's what I love about the character, because that really is what I'm like. I don't get f—ed over by people, especially men."

Conjugal conquest is perhaps the last thing on the minds of the guys on the business side of Katya's big gun—a souped-up version of what the filmmakers say is an actual weapon called the Flechette, which discharges six-inch metal slivers that reduce its targets to bloody string cheese. Opening with a flashback that establishes the kinship between the enigmatically named Baxter Weller and Jack Travis (Patrick), the film kicks into high gear when a wealthy businessman who deals in stolen industrial technology double-crosses his partner, a retired Secret Service agent. The ex-agent lures the lethal Katya and her team to get even.

Meanwhile, the businessman—tipped off to the coming peril—contacts his former intelligence operative, Travis, about protecting his daughter, Dianna (Darlene Vogel of *Back to the Future Part II*). Travis agrees to



the task, but only if his fellow operative Baxter, is cut in on the deal. With the busi[illegible] blessing, the trio retreats into the vastness of the Canadian wilderness. And the hunt begins.

Decoy, a Floyd Group/F Y D O E. Films production to be distributed worldwide by Prism Pictures, is the second feature directing effort and the first high-profile project of Victor Rambaldi, the direct-to-video *Primal R[illegible]*. The action-picture arena is a great place to exploit interesting ideas, like high tech weaponry," says Rambaldi, 37, the progeny of puppet and mechanical FX maestro Carlo Rambaldi (*Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *Alien*), who executive produced the film and designed its impressive arsenal. Beyond that, I'm always very attracted to stories about friendship and loyalty. This is a story about two men who are misfits, who've abandoned civilization, and how they sacrifice for each other in the name of survival."

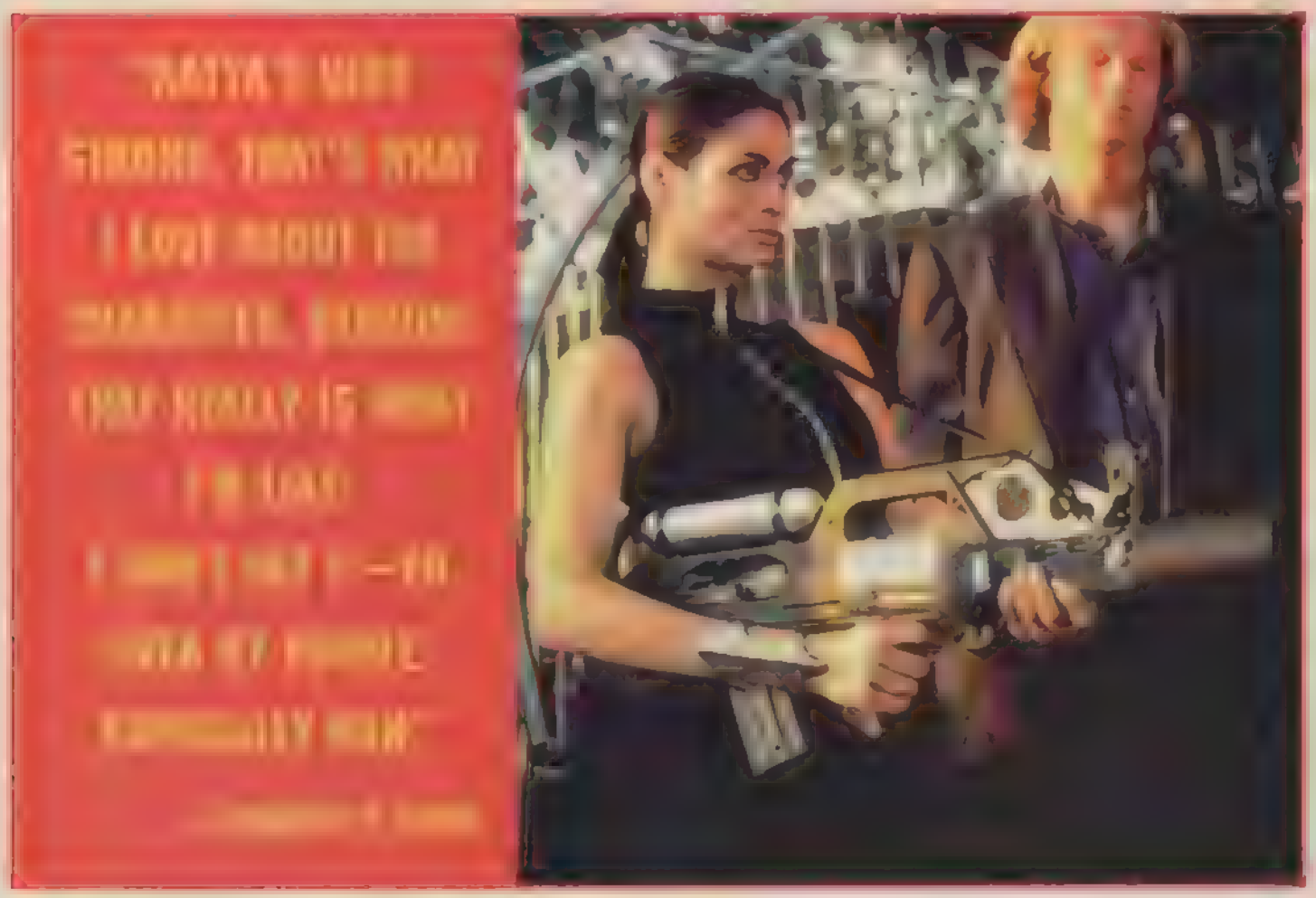
Rambaldi and company learned all about sacrifice and survival while making *Decoy* in Saskatchewan last summer. Originally set to be shot in Mexico, but shifted north of the border by producers Antonio Cortese and Gary Kaufmann due to the revolution in Chiapas, the film was beset by several location challenges. Chief among the latter was Canada's booming summer insect population. "It's a beautiful place," says Rambaldi of Lac LaRonge, home to the Cree Indian Reservation. "But the mosquitoes and black flies were [illegible] problem. We had this constant swarm of insects in front of the lens — not to mention the ones that the actors inadvertently ate while saying their lines!" Because the production was on an Indian reservation, where insecticides and repellents other than body lotions were prohibited, the crew resorted to running fog machines around the set's perimeter to keep the critters at bay.

While Mother Nature didn't quite cooperate, the performers bent over backward and forward and sideways — to fulfill the rigorous physical demands of the script. "Peter and Robert were great troupers despite the difficulties," says Rambaldi, adding that one scene has Baxter jumping 40 feet from a bridge into river rapids — a stunt Weller did himself. Another scene finds Jack Travis trapped inside a school bus that's being chased by the Katva cadre through dense woods at 50 m p h. "I think *Speed* meets the climactic trunk-dodging forest pursuit in *Return of the Jedi*," Rambaldi recalls the tricky setup. "During the shoot-out, Robert Patrick smashes the windshield and jumps on the hood. He was harnessed to the bus, which is one of the most unstable things in the world — particularly traveling that fast over very rough terrain. Plus, he's perched up there shooting with his gun. It was very hard to do, very intense."

Rambaldi credits the good humor of the cast for supplying some welcome levity. With Weller and Patrick along for the ride, *RoboCop* and *T2* jokes were inevitable. "Katya sort of simplifies the two roles into one," says Rambaldi. "Charlotte called herself the 'Lady Terminator.'" Lewis, who swam laps every day to stay tough and buff for the role, laughs heartily as he recalls tackling the screen tough dudes. "I was kicking their asses."

But Katya's fearsome Flechette was far from funny. ("It's the real thing, too," Lewis enthuses. "That motherf—er shoots.") Rambaldi says his father spent five weeks modifying the phallic firearm for use in the film. "We wanted to do some sort of a strange design that somehow underscored the power of this mercenary, especially for the fact that she's a woman. But it was a working gun. It just takes a couple of shots to shred you to pieces."

According to a penitent Lewis, Katya also did some shredding offscreen — without the help of the Flechette. "The cast and crew went to a disco one night, and I started dancing with one of the grips. Some girl came up to me and threatened me in my face. Because it was an Indian reservation, the women were very territorial and a little



uptight.... I apparently ripped her necklace off and told her not to f— with me because I'd f— with her. At that point the production manager intervened, reminding me that I was Charlotte Lewis and not Katya. The girl ended up apologizing to me, but I left immediately. For a while I wasn't really in a good position [with the locals], so I didn't go to the laundromat on my own or anything. It was a little strange."

Stranger still was the ghost that Lewis insists inhabited her hotel room. Although the hotel's management assured her that there were no secrets in the establishment's closet, the production company informed her at the end of the shoot that the lodge was once a brothel and that a 26-year-old prostitute named Charlotte had been murdered there. "She took no shit from any man, and I guess she was angry about being hacked to death," says Lewis, a self-proclaimed clairvoyant. "I love all that stuff. I mean, I really believe in ghosts and aliens more than I think I believe in human beings."

Though enamored of the paranormal, Lewis maintains a firm, um, grasp on reality. "You've just got to take life by the balls and shake it up a bit," declares *Decoy*'s dauntless gunwoman, who admits to getting "quite upset" whenever she doesn't get a role for which she feels she'd have been particularly right. "Anyone who's said no to me has just made me become more ambitious – and more patient. I believe in karma, and I know that if I just sit still by the river long enough I'll see my enemies floating by face down. I'd never do anything [harmful] outright. I'll just sit and wait, and I'll think it. Which is frightening with me, because when I *do* think things they *do* come true. And I don't always know what to think."

Just don't give her any ideas, okay? ◆

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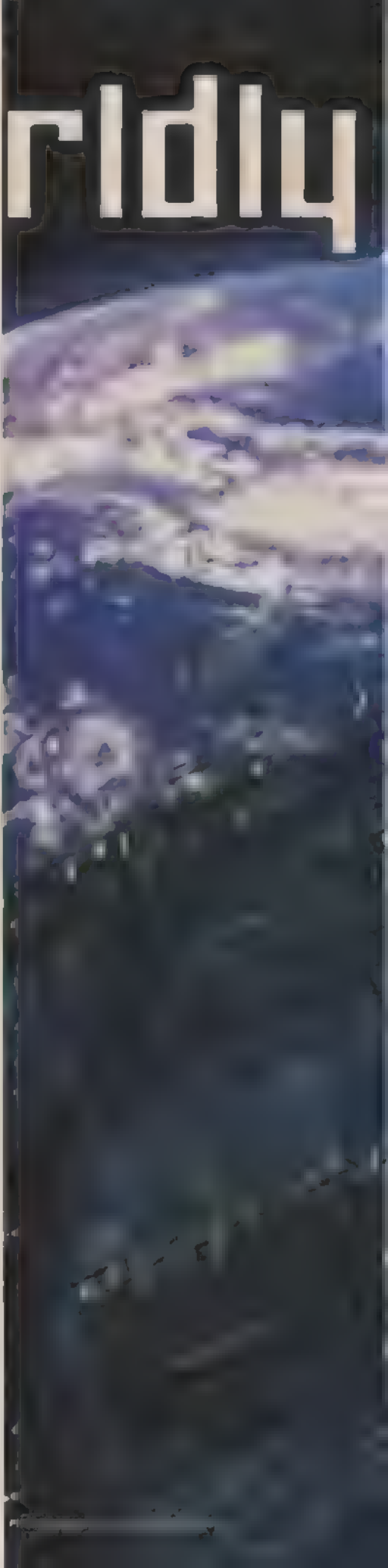


Dream Quest combines old-fashioned motion-control work with digital technology to create a realistic future on EARTH 2

by RON MAGID

In a future that environmental activists can envision with frightening clarity, the Earth has become uninhabitable, its dwindling population confined to space stations high above the polluted planet. Before the last remaining children succumb to a deadly disease related to being cocooned in an artificial environment, a group of renegades vows to transport them to another planet. The destination is a distant alien world they have christened Earth 2.

Earth 2, the new NBC series produced by Steven Spielberg's Amblin Entertainment, requires every gigabyte of ingenuity from effects powerhouse Dream Quest Images, which produced Academy Award-winning imagery for *The Abyss* and *Total Recall*. For the pilot alone, Visual Effects Supervisor Mike Shea and Digital Effects Supervisor Tim Landry delivered 27 astonishing effects shots in 11 weeks. "The producers had a very specific look in mind. They wanted that feeling of expanse that you get in big-screen films," Landry says. "But getting anywhere near that look when we didn't have nearly the amount of time or budget [of a feature film] was our biggest challenge."

The FX work makes its appearance early in the pilot episode for the dramatic escape of the explorers' spacecraft: a vast space station, a mere speck orbiting the lethal planet Earth. "Anytime there's a shot of the space station exterior, that's a 3-D computer graphic (CG) model/matte painting," Landry says. And our planet? "That's a NASA photograph of Earth," Landry says with a grin. "I may be crazy but I'm not stupid! Creating realistic planets is really difficult to do. People know what cloud patterns look like from NASA photos, so you may as well use what's available to you, especially since we paid for it as taxpayers."

The biggest surprise about *Earth 2*'s effects is that those space station shots comprise the highest percentage of CG in the pilot. Most of *Earth 2*'s space effects were done the old-fashioned way, using real, honest-to-goodness miniatures and traditional motion control. That's virtually taboo in this digital age with TV shows like *Babylon 5* creating first-rate and cost-effective FX in the computer, but *Earth 2*'s producers sold Amblin on spending a little extra to enable

Dream Quest to achieve the realism offered by miniatures. "Tony To and Michael Duggan wanted the show to have a look that ... is less, rather than more, CG," explains Visual Effects Supervisor Mike Shea. "So we took a mixed bag approach to the effects combining miniatures with digital matte paintings and 3-D CG.

My hat's off to them," Landry adds. "They thought they could get more of an edge realism with miniatures in our case, and I think they were right and that the results show. That didn't mean we didn't use digital to our advantage every time we could. All those miniature shots were composited digitally, and we added digital effects occasionally."

Earth 2's images are not unlike effects we've done using traditional optical effects, Shea concludes, "except that we're able to cut a lot of corners with the advent of digital."

A NEW EDEN: The Eden Advance Ship heads toward *Earth 2*.

The *Earth 2* pilot episode's half-dozen models ranged in size from a small escape pod to the Eden Advance and Colony Ships and the Spaceport Launch Tube. Most of the spacecraft were constructed from scratch in the Dream Quest modelshop by a skilled team of 20 hands-on artists over a period of 10 weeks, based on designs from Amblin's art director. To control costs, Dream Quest modified those designs to take advantage of old cast pieces in its modelshop that could be quickly and cheaply reproduced and used to build the spacecraft and launch tube. "*Earth 2*'s art director Victoria Paul, came down and got together with Dave Goldberg, our model shop supervisor," Shea recalls. "We went through tons of existing space 'nemies,' cast parts we had generated for other shows. The art director told us to make so many of each piece and put them on the ships and the launch tube which saved patterning time. It was all in an effort to remain faithful to the art direction and stick within budget.

The use of those myriad nemies on the launch tube miniature, which measured six feet in diameter and 20 feet long, made life much easier for Dream Quest's modelmakers. Size was less the issue than detail, since the launch tube had to appear several miles long. "The launch tube was a very large set, but it certainly was a small scale," Shea says, which created problems from the beginning in terms of selling its vast scale. Before we built the actual launch tube miniature, we built a foam-core model, which convinced us there just wasn't enough human-scale stuff in there. Although the Eden Advance Ship and Colony Ship gave some human scale, we needed something recognizable from our time to really sell the immensity of the launch tube. So Dave Goldberg built us a train and we altered the shots we'd planned. We weren't sure at first if featuring the train would sell the scale; now there's little trains running through every shot.

"The level of detail and complexity of the model was mindboggling," Goldberg says, not to mention the logistics of making certain sections removable just so we could move our camera inside it. We had six people soldering little miniature bulbs and plugging fiberoptics for about six weeks, and we'd still be putting lights in it if the show hadn't aired."

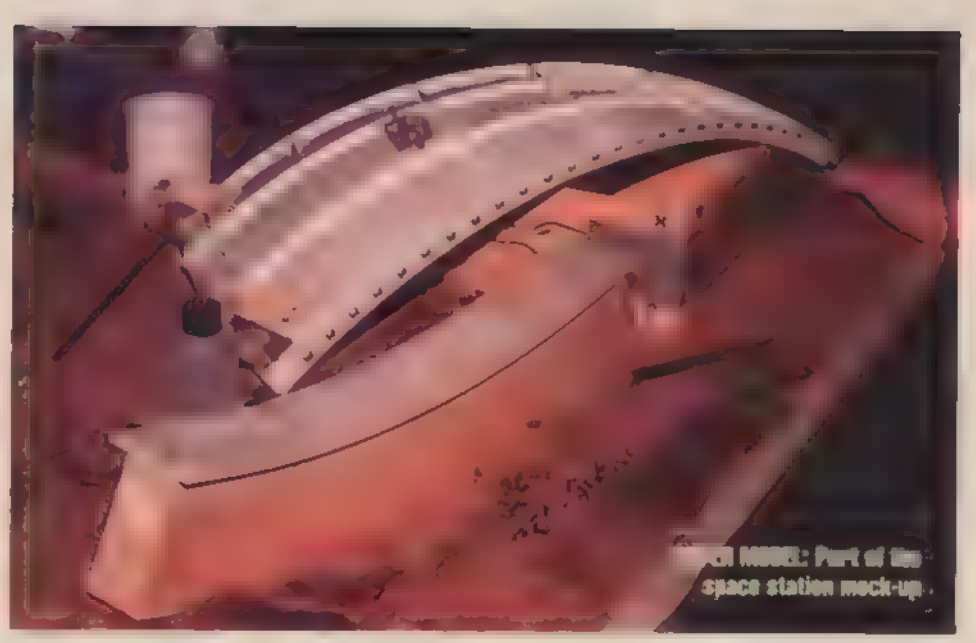
Since the series' main characters are unlikely to return to Earth anytime soon, the Dream Quest team knew from the beginning that once the colonists left Earth in the two-hour pilot, the space station and its launch tube were history. While one-time effects are common in feature films, it's an anomaly in budget-conscious television production. But the launch tube gave *Earth 2*'s pilot exactly what its producers hoped for: the look and scope of a feature film. "That was the biggest frustration for the producers and for us. We wanted to create some spectacular space footage to establish the mood and the whole situation, knowing that it would be thrown away, by definition, for the series. The colonists leave Earth, and all that technology behind."

Dream Quest spent much preproduction time building custom model-movers to streamline the photography for the huge volume of miniature shots for the pilot. For the launch tube shots, the spacecraft were floor mounted on separate, gimbaled model-movers with standard yaw-pitch-roll on the

same track," Shea says, "but once the Eden Advance and Colony ships were in space, we hung them on our ceiling marionette movers and flew our cameras around them to create some wild shots. Because the Eden Advance ship and the Colony ship were both then moving in relation to each other, the lights on the Advance ship could crawl over the Colony ship, which is one of the cool things you get for free when you work with miniatures."

Shea also set the spacecraft and launch tube models up in parallel positions on its Gantry stage, which features several overhead motion-controlled rigs for flying cameras and marionetting miniatures, as well as plenty of floor room for stationary gimbal-mounted models and motion-control camera dolly tracks. "That way, we could program back and forth, translating one scale move into the other," Shea explains. "We had two sets in two different scales lined up, and if we programmed on one, we'd just scale the entire motion and reuse the program for the other. There was only a duvatene curtain between sets, so the crew could easily bounce from one to the other."

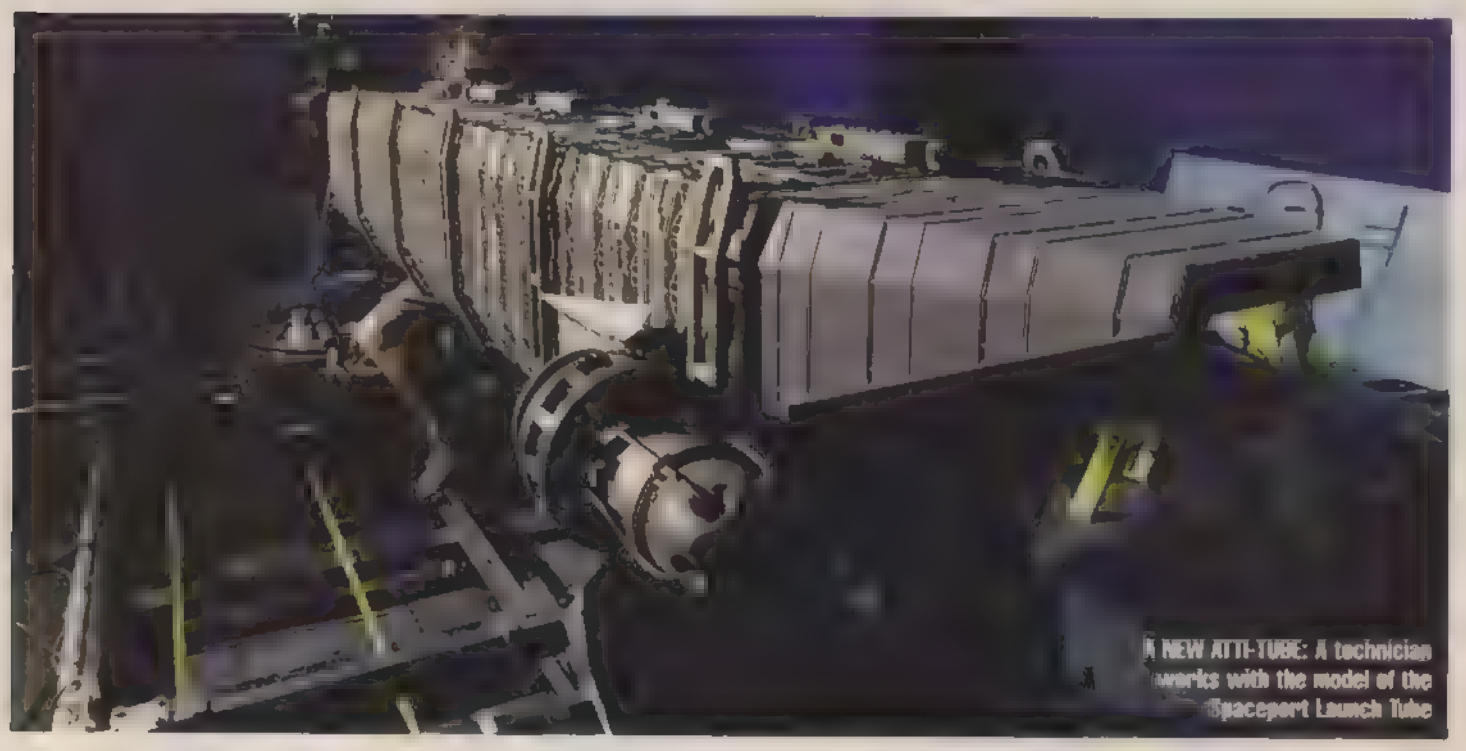
A third "rainy day" miniature setup on the Gantry stage handled more peripheral effects like the communication disc and evacuation pod launches from the Eden Advance Ship to Earth 2. The intense television schedule made the evacuation pod drop especially complex, forcing Shea to shoot his effects backward. "The plan was to run a Steadicam up to a window on the Advance Ship and see the pod blow off," Shea relates. "Unfortunately, the pod blast-off effect was filmed first so not only didn't we have the Steadicam shot for the first half of the shot, none of us had even seen the set for that hookup. All I had was a blueprint. Felix Alcala, *Earth 2*'s director of photography, made these effects shots work because he kept his word and lit [the shots] the way he said he was going to at our preproduction meetings. I lit our effects based on the way he said he would light, then sent him a clip of the effect, and he matched his interior to that. Boy, is that an awkward situation."


SPACE MODEL: Part of the space station mock-up.

Shea and Tim Landry divided up the Earth 2 pilot's effects by sequence. Each miniature shot involved dozens of supporting personnel importing and exporting images from myriad computers. "We used the full gamut from high-end Silicon Graphics machines to Macintosh and anything else we could get our hands on," Landry says with a laugh.

"We needed them," Shea adds. "Most of the 27 separate effects shots we did during that time required two or three elements."

One of the pilot's prettiest shots depicted the destruction of the Eden Advance Ship, which burns up in Earth 2's atmosphere before crashing into the planet. "That shot really does give a sense of depth and says the ship isn't going to make it," Landry says, "but it was no fun to composite. Creating a leading-edge fire element that actually looked like it was burning was tough. The guys shot a bunch of elements on stage, including a foam-core mock up of the Advance Ship with paper streamers we called the 'fuzzy bunny' which was the same size as the model. They blew those paper streamers with a fan and shot them at a very slow frame rate, four seconds per frame."


A NEW ATTI-TUBE: A technician works with the model of the Spaceport Launch Tube.

When we played that back, it looked an awful lot like flame." It's like the old trick of waving rags in front of the camera to simulate fire, he says. That element is in there, along with some edge outlines, shifting mattes, a bunch of Photoshop filters and image processing. My buddies at Cosa After Effects also created some custom software for us that made the burning streaks trailing off the ship.

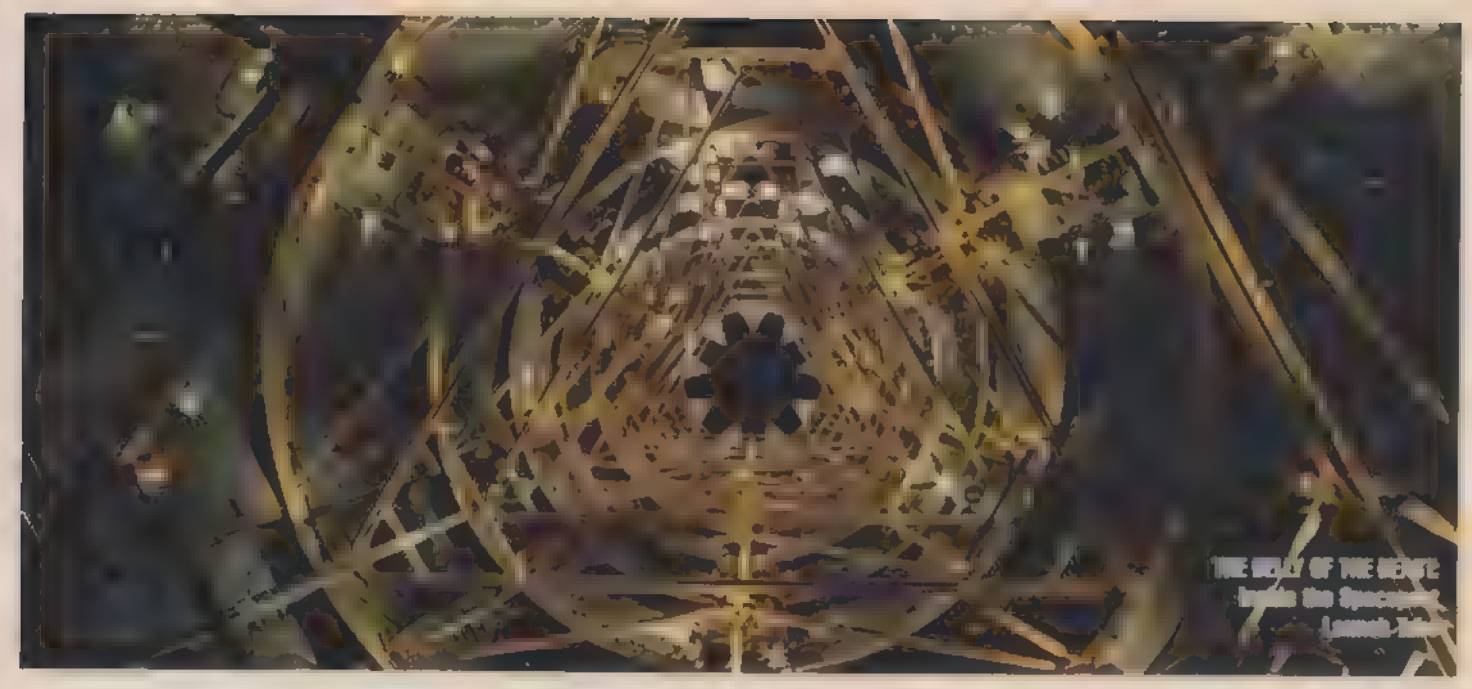
As for Earth 2 itself, whenever it appears it's more or less Landry's original digital matte painting with a few tweaks. "I did that effect using anything I could come up with. I used displacement maps to make my flat painting of that spherical planet appear to rotate for the show's main title. I also added just a hint of real clouds that I stole from NASA photos, but overall, everything about Earth 2 seen from space is mostly fake."

As are Landry's exquisite night matte shots of Earth 2's twin moons over the planet's rocky surface, whose rich blue tones evoke Maxfield Parrish. "I take that as a great compliment," Landry beams, "considering I don't make my living as a matte painter. I use any trick I can to get the image on the screen."

But that's exactly what special effects are about. Among Landry's crew's greatest contributions to the *Earth 2* series is the futuristic high-tech look of the colonists' gadgetry, including a personal computer in an eyepiece. Taken all together, the various gadgets give the show a nice sprinkling of high-tech pixie dust. "You have to keep reminding folks that, yes, this is the future," Landry says. "We're on a different planet, it's not really a bunch of guys out on location in Santa Fe."

One of the more interesting features of the explorers' robot, "Yale," is the Hologlobe, a three-dimensional information sphere that projects everything from maps of Earth 2 to archival footage of Hitler, which Landry hints may be symptomatic of bugs in Yale's programming: "Yale's kind of a walking tool kit or hardware store, although he has some bad things happening in his holographic projections. The Hologlobe went through a process of evolution. We knew we had to make it for the pilot and we had a map of Earth 2, which also became the basis of my matte painting. I wrapped that artwork around a CG globe, rendered it as a 3-D rotating image and made a whole bunch of frames so we could use it anywhere we wanted to. I handed that over to Tim Sassoon, one of my top CG designers who mucked with it in compositing a great deal to give it a specific texture quality and glow that produces light."

Sassoon also developed the design for the robot's database. For one unique sequence wherein Yale matches villainous Tim Curry to information in his memory, Sassoon animated a 3-D hologram of Curry rotating in space beside the actor in the scene, along with scrolling data. The only problem creating that effect was that Curry hadn't been shot against bluescreen. "On that, we basical



ly worked with the scrapings off the floor to put those shots together." Landry says proudly. "In this case, all we received from the production was the plate with Curry in it. Tim Sassoon cut Curry out of that image, flopped the image, treated it to look like a hologram and put it back in. We purposefully left in some roto-chatter to give it a little life and make it interesting. We try to use our habits as our strengths in a case like that. Now these 'Yale Vision' effects have become part of our tool kit.

The value of digital technology is thrown into sharp relief on *Earth 2*, where everything created in CG is still around but the miniatures are already scrap. Still, Landry is hopeful he'll be working with miniatures in the series. "We're not doing too much with miniatures right now," Landry says wistfully, "but that may change.

Landry has already begun work on an upcoming episode wherein areas of Earth 2 are turned to stone. "It's their equivalent of the Blue Meanies' attack in *Yellow Submarine*, where everyone turns to granite," Landry says. "We have to transform a whole landscape into a cold, lifeless texture. It won't affect people but it will affect Terrians, who are just people in green suits! One of them gets frozen in a wall, but I'm not sure how that's going to work yet—they're shooting as we speak. They have a casting of a Terrian for the aftermath, but we're going to have to get an actor into that position, then blend him into that final stage. I just finished shooting plates in Santa Fe, where some set pieces were dressed with stonelike textures to provide us with elements and a look we can match to. Fortunately, my friends at After Effects have provided us with a tool kit that will solve an awful lot of problems. We're researching their matte wipe techniques that will allow us to change the texture and color of the filmed locations.

Though *Earth 2*'s effects could not exist without the advent of digital technology, Dream Quest's effects experts are proud that they managed to create feature film-quality miniature effects on a television timetable and budget. Amblin Entertainment and Universal Studios expressed their appreciation by contracting Dream Quest Images to provide effects for the entire 22 episodes of the new NBC series' first season, during which time the FX house hopes to rediscover the futuristic, hard-edged, industrial imagery it created in the pilot. ◆

Hollywood Roulette

Everybody wants to be a big winner, but even the power players have to hedge their bets

By Michael Goldman

"When you do a science-fiction film," says Larry Kasanoff, chairman of Threshold Entertainment, "you can't do a location shoot on the planet Gorkon. You have to create the planet Gorkon—and that costs money."

The rewards of creating a new world, of course, can be immense. With the top three domestic grossing films of all time (*E.T.*, *Jurassic Park*, *Star Wars*), and seven of the top 10, all coming out of the sci-fi/action/special effects-driven category, no one in Hollywood underestimates the importance of the high tech blockbuster to the bottom line.

But fashioning a blockbuster isn't as simple as handing a movie star a gun and tossing money at one of the big effects houses. While the big-budget opus sitting on a studio executive's desk might be the next *Star Wars*, it also might be the next *Dune*. So how on Earth—or Gorkon, for that matter—do studios secure the kind of favorable odds that can blast a cash-hungry project off the launch pad?

There is no set formula, says Kasanoff, who just finished producing this spring's $30 million *Mortal Kombat* and will be producing *G.I. Joe* for 1996. Kasanoff has extensive experience setting up financing for genre pics. Before starting Threshold, he served as president of James Cameron's Lightstorm Entertainment during the making of *Terminator 2* and was a principal architect of Lightstorm's complicated financing deal that enabled the company to make the $100 million *True Lies*.

"Basically, you have two kinds of movies in this genre—mega-budget movies and all the rest," he says. "With the mega-budget movies, you usually get a director with final cut and a powerful actor and spend whatever it takes—$50 million, $80 million. The mentality with those films is simple: Get it right, make each shot great. In those cases, the studio can only win if it is a huge hit. So if you are spending $60 million on a picture, do you refuse to spend $1 million on a particular shot? At that point, not spending the money could hurt you because you need a huge hit to make a profit."

So once a big-budget picture gets the go-ahead, studios sometimes feel that they can do little more than cross their fingers. Spielberg's *Jurassic Park*, for example, cost $63 million, including marketing and other costs, it needed to pull in about $100 million before it began to make a profit. The dino-epic netted $357 million in domestic theatrical release, about $700 million worldwide. The Schwarzenegger epic *The Last Action Hero*, in contrast, cost around $100 million; industry estimates of the film's losses (including all ancillary revenue outlets) are around $25–30 million.

And with "all the rest," successes can be just as unpredictable.

Take 1992's *Lawnmower Man*. That film, loaded with computer-generated special effects,

SPEED
EX-COSTS
EX-PLOSIONS
PRODUCTION DELAYS

[illegible] $50 million worldwide – the top-grossing independent film of 1992 in the United States. To the movie's director, Brett Leonard, who is currently working on the $30 million *Virtuosity* for Paramount, *Lawnmower* [illegible] *Parks*.

Obviously, [illegible] such [illegible] but [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

thriller *Johnny Mnemonic*, based on a story by cyberpunk guru William Gibson. All attempts to make the film had failed until producer Peter Hoffman presold it in various territories overseas (gaining a much-needed infusion of cash) and teamed up with the Canadian company Alliance Communications to complete financing. By giving Alliance partial ownership of the film, and using a Canadian star in Keanu Reeves along with Canadian writer Gibson, *Johnny Mnemonic* was turned into a "Canadian content" production qualifying for subsidies in Canada. That made the effects-heavy project viable with only a $25 million investment. While that makes it the most expensive Canadian film ever made, it also makes *Johnny* potential blockbuster fare on a medium-range budget.

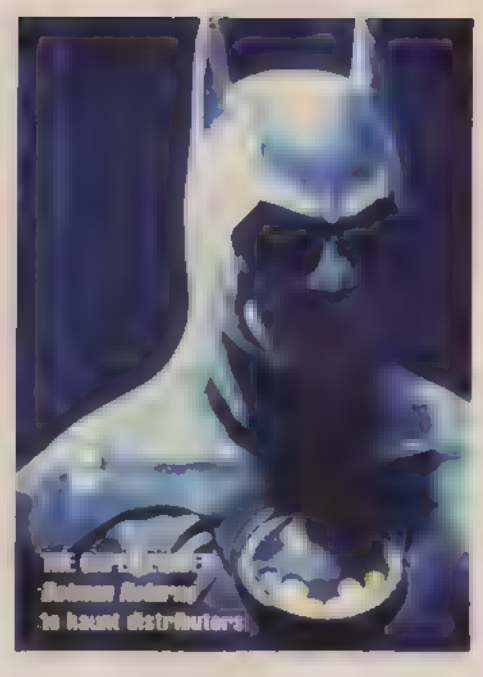
But even with the growth of independent filmmaking, no one should shed a tear for the studios. Including indie productions, major studios make money—with little risk—as distributors.

When a film is studio-produced, the studio takes most of the risk and most of the profits. When it is independently produced, the pie is sliced into many pieces. The typical indie producer must find several different entities to finance the picture's cost, and then take it to a distributor who, in turn, takes it to the exhibitors. The indie producer most likely will take the project to a major studio to distribute the film after setting up his own financing.

If, on the other hand, a producer hopes to lure a studio into financing one of his projects, he or she will pitch the idea at the studio. If the studio likes the idea, depending on a variety of scenarios, it may pay the producer as much as $25,000 initially to develop the idea into a script. Many indies like this route because it takes the financing burden off them, though it also curtails creative clout.

Not only can they finance films internally, studios also have the advantage over indies once the cameras start rolling since they aren't responsible to movie-specific investors and can better absorb losses. But they are not more immune to financial disaster than independents. Just as one box-office bomb can upend an indie producer, a collection of failures can shake a major studio to its foundations. (1980's disastrous *Heaven's Gate* finally broke the already-troubled United Artists and more recently, Columbia/TriStar, owned by Sony Corp., had to write off $2.7 billion in losses after a series of flops stretching from 1993's *Last Action Hero* to last fall's *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*.)

Obviously, studios have not figured out how to predict a film's box-office power. But they can study a project's potential appeal and make reasonable decisions about what it will cost to make the movie properly within the limits of that appeal. Analysis of all types



begins as soon as a project is pitched. What and how large is the target audience? What budget category will be needed to turn this story into a viable film — low, medium or high? Does the story require a major star? Does it fit the studio's resources? How should the project be marketed?

Once those questions are answered, the studio starts contemplating actual costs. First what will it cost to develop the project through preproduction? Then, the studio will set a production budget that takes into account above-the-line costs (producer, director, actors, writers, and below-the-line, or hard, costs — the entire crew, all the way from gaffers to director of photography — and all other expenses.

If the picture is at the lower end of the budget scale, it might mean signing one star (instead of two or three), using non-union crews, shooting on a tighter schedule with fewer scenes being reshot, and possibly limiting special effects or stunts. But most studio pictures tend toward the medium to high end of the budget scale.

The studios' philosophy is to hedge their bets," says independent producer John Ketchum. "Generally, if it is a major budget picture, they figure if they can target their audience, attach a big star and promote the film properly, they will make money. But if it looks like they might be wrong, there isn't much they can do. Once the film is in production, it's like a train going downhill. They have to keep going." Thus, it should come as no surprise that studios will often spend huge amounts on promotion and marketing.

Finally, the movie hits the theaters. "You put all that work and money on the table and roll the dice," says Kasanoff, "hoping that at 7 p.m. on Friday night, on opening day, people will show up to see the movie. In the end that's what it comes down to."

If the movie bombs, executives and producers start pointing fingers, hoping the failure doesn't impact their careers—and praying that overseas receipts and video rentals will eventually pull the film out of the red. If the movie is a hit (and sometimes inventive, Byzantine math is used to make that determination), the division of profits begins. Generally speaking, exhibitors take about 50 percent of box-office profits. The other 50 percent goes to the studio/distributor or is split between the studio and the independent producer. If it's an indie film, the producer must then turn around and split his or her profits with all third-party participants. A variety of complicated formulas are then used to

determine a "floor" on how far the producer's profit percentage can fall.

The studios' relationship with exhibitors does, from time to time, get sticky as they argue over the spoils of success and the pain of failure. But, in the end, everyone recognizes that it's a "reciprocal relationship," as Howard Lachtman, executive vice president of marketing for Cineplex Odeon Theaters puts it. "They need screens to show their product, we need films—it's that simple."

Complicating the relationship are movie-specific deals that studios occasionally work out with exhibitors. Like everyone else in the film business, exhibitors take risks. For example, the exhibitor will sometimes take a smaller-than-normal percentage of the revenues at the start of a movie's run in exchange for a much-larger chunk later in the run, gambling that a certain film has long [illegible].

One recent example is *Batman Returns* in 1992, when some exhibitors agreed to take closer to 90 percent from Warner Bros. at the beginning of the run. Though the movie opened stronger than the original *Batman*, its profits dropped sharply in ensuing weeks. Certain exhibitors, remembering the extended success of the original *Batman*, bowed to the studio's leverage in that case rather than be left out of Batmania, only to regret that decision later.

Though U.S. theater owners are entirely dependent on it, the domestic theatrical release for studios is only the starting point for calculating gross profits for a picture. Overseas theatrical markets are lucrative, with new markets opening all the time, and producers or studios often presell overseas distribution rights before a film is ever made to jump-start production. In addition, overseas TV opportunities for properties, once their theatrical runs are over, are currently enjoying a major boom.

Network television, TV syndication, the critical home-video market, non-theatrical showings (such as on airplanes), music rights, publishing rights and the growing world of merchandising and other ancillary opportunities, such as video games, also factor heavily in the equation. Some movies take in most of their profits from these other areas, and even losers like last summer's *Blown Away* can rub some red from their ledger this way.

Since most methods of financing a film and dividing profits are subject to negotiation and a variety of conditions, there are few constants in the world of film. There is one thing we can rely on—what they call "the biz" is an enterprise like no other on the American business landscape, due to its unique mixing of the cold, hard business world and the emotionally charged creative world.

"You can have all the formulas and major deals you want," says Kasanoff, "but at the end of the day, it only works if you are smart, passionate, talented and lucky, all at the same time." ◆

There are Hollywood producers who insist that the purpose of special effects is simply to "help you tell a better story." But most insiders are willing to dismiss such utopian notions. One goes as far as to say that "major sci-fi movies are very often pitched based not on story at all but on who is doing the special effects, what is new about the special effects and how much the special [illegible]."

Not one loves big special effects—but while that left independent filmmakers out in the cold 10 years ago, the times have changed. The wonders of digital computer technology have now made it possible to do more than ever before on a small budget. With advanced computer work, FX gurus can create complicated special effects digitally, meaning it's no longer necessary to optically shoot and reshoot effects scenes at huge costs.

Thus it was possible in 1992 for Brett Leonard to fill *Lawnmower Man* with a large number of effects—FX screen time on that picture totaled over 20 minutes, far above the industry norm—and still keep the movie's entire production budget at around $6 million. It was possible for industry veteran Chris Woods to utilize a then-unprecedented 153 digital shots in 1993's *Super Mario Bros.*, while keeping the total special-effects budget for that $50 million film under $5 million. Though *Super Mario Bros.* barely made a dent in the box office, Woods' FX work on the film earned an Academy Award nomination.

With the rise of computer FX have come small, independent effects houses, which are confidently elbowing their way into an area previously the domain solely of the studios and Industrial Light & Magic.

"The bigger effects houses will always enjoy their day in the sun because major-budget pictures often prefer to spend more because it's the way they've always done things," says Woods. "But smaller companies have cropped up everywhere since the digital explosion."

As with other aspects of filmmaking, increased competition is causing companies to try a variety of innovative techniques, both to create new effects and make them affordable.

Still, digital is by no means cheap. Computer costs remain high, though increased speed is allowing work to be done faster these days, and the main expense remains what it was in the old optical days—manpower: Large chunks of FX budgets go to programmers.

But perhaps the chief reason that FX remain pricey is that studios and the public obsessively want films to feature effects that have never been seen before. Thus, the revolutionary morphing techniques of *Terminator 2*, which fundamentally changed the industry just three years ago, no longer pop eyes. So the search goes on for the new and different.

"What you can do for the same dollar has greatly increased," says Woods. "And it will continue to increase. But because people's expectations also increase, that isn't always enough. You can do a given shot cheaply today, and in a couple of years, we'll be able to do it even cheaper. But, in a couple of years, they won't be satisfied with using that effect anymore and they will want something newer and more complicated."

Last year, Brett Leonard formed a new multimedia company that he calls a "virtual studio"—attempting to bring filmmaking and FX under one roof.

"We just try to stay in front of the wave," he says. "You need something new, things people haven't seen before. And we showed with *Lawnmower Man* that you can do that on a low budget and then go out and make monies from it. That's the whole idea behind new technology, to be more cost and time efficient."—*MG*

VOYAGER'S LOGICAL CHOICE

Tim Russ on Spock, the Vulcan ideal and the politics of Star Trek

by EDWARD GROSS

"I think my being cast in *Voyager* was as much a matter of my desire and determination as it was a matter of destiny," says Tim Russ.

The actor, co-starring in *Star Trek Voyager* as the Vulcan tactical/security chief Tuvok, has been on the periphery of Gene Roddenberry's universe for almost a decade, fighting for a spot in the center of it all. In 1987 he just missed being cast as Geordi La Forge on *The Next Generation*, a role that ultimately went to LeVar Burton (Russ later appeared in the episode "Starship Mine"). Several years down the road he was set for a regular role on *Deep Space Nine*, but the character was written out at the last minute (again, he guest-starred, this time in the episode "Invasive Procedures"). And at the end of 1994, he shared the bridge of the Enterprise-B with Capt. James T. Kirk in a brief scene in the feature film, *Star Trek: Generations*.

"[Producer] Rick Berman has always been in my corner," Russ explains. And, along with that ace in the hole, the Vulcan Tuvok seemed an ideal role for the actor, a longtime fan of the original series.

"I had the edge over most people reading for the part," he says matter-of-fact, "because I know that character. Tuvok is definitely based on Spock. It seems like all my other *Star Trek* parts have led to this. Why does everybody like Spock? Why was he genuinely—over Capt. Kirk even—the most popular character on that show? It's because he was what we all want to be. We want to be perfect, we want to be able to overcome all the trials we have to deal with. I think the character is so interesting to watch, because every situation that came up you'd want to see what Spock would do, you wanted to see how he reacted—and you enjoyed watching him just completely confused and baffled by human beings. You could forget that he was part-human. So, coming into the reading I was armed to the teeth with this character. And casting is generally 80 percent personality and 20 percent talent. I'm not saying I'm able to do the things the way Tuvok does, it's just that I do like to approach things from an analytical or logical standpoint."

And Russ is quick to point out that there is a distinct difference between Spock and Tuvok. Leonard Nimoy's character is half-human, Russ' is a full Vulcan.

Muses the actor, whose TV credits include *Living Single*, *seaQuest DSV* and *Murphy Brown*, "If you are 100 percent Vulcan, obviously there's no choice between being human or Vulcan. Spock had to make a choice. Tuvok never had to make that choice. It's like an athlete who trains to do the decathlon and an athlete who's born to do the decathlon. The person who comes into this world destined by nature to do it has the edge."

For the most part, Vulcans in the various *Star Trek* incarnations have almost invariably served in the sciences. Tuvok, conversely, tackles both tactical duties and starship security. "If you're a fighter pilot," Russ proposes, "you don't want to panic when you're being shot at. You have to be cool, calm and collected. You've got to be focused. That's what the Vulcan is best for. So he is an ideal tactical officer because under fire he doesn't lose it."

One of the challenges of the part, Russ admits, is performing without emotion while still offering a multilayered characterization that people can relate to.

"The majority of the time, you're doing exactly what a Vulcan will do," he says. "You're giving information, you're analyzing a situation. It's when you have to deal with people in an emotional situation that it becomes very tough. I've had a couple of scenes already where I've had to hold the emotions in — because, as an actor, I've spent years trying to do the opposite, trying to find all these emotions. It's difficult because I have to hold back even the slightest smile, the slightest sort of human connection. The other aspect is the confron- tional scenes. There is conflict between Tuvok and Chakotay [a member of the Maquis who accepted the position of first officer on the Voyager], especially in the second episode, because Tuvok was undercover for Starfleet

on the Maquis ship. He has real hostility toward Tuvok. I cannot reflect that. I can't give it back. Yet I have dialogue that contradicts him or challenges him. But all of the challenges are based on logic."

Russ is convinced that *Voyager* is much closer in spirit to the original *Star Trek* than either *TNG* or *DS9*. The similarities to the original show are to- , he says, particularly in the close relationships that develop between the chief characters, something that has been missing from recent voyages.

"This show has all the elements," he enthuses. "You have humor, conflicting personalities, a variety of points of view. If the stories are substantial, it should all work. We're dealing with a lot of planetary stuff and other civilizations, which is what the original *Star Trek* was about. And then there's the connection between the characters. There are scenes between Tuvok and Capt. Janeway that are very much like Kirk-Spock scenes. There's a poignant scene in the pilot about being away from one's family. I tell her, 'Vulcans don't worry,' and she replies, 'They miss you.' She knows him. In the show we just finished, I tell her that I know what she's thinking and what she's about to do. And she says, 'How do you know what I'm going to do?' I give her this long explanation of how, psychologically, I've observed her over the years. 'Suffice to say,' I tell her, 'I know you quite well.' This takes place right on the bridge, right in the middle of making a decision about something with these aliens and there's this little bit of an exchange. It's a little moment but an important one, because it establishes that they have a past in terms of working together. That's very important stuff."

"There are scenes with Tuvok and Janeway that are very much like Kirk-Spock scenes."

—Tim Russ

Russ explains that the writers are going out of their way to flesh out the characters and develop the relationships between them. "In every show, of course, there is a dilemma," he says. "But those subplots — the ongoing relationships — are very important to making the show work. The interaction is what makes the difference, because then you're dealing with people on a real level. That is what I felt definitely was missing in *Next Ge-* ."

Not only does he believe Tuvok is drawn in part from Spock, Russ says Kirk and Janeway also have an important connection. Both of them make their own decisions — Kirk because he trusted his gut more than Starfleet command and Janeway, though also strong-willed, because she's no longer in contact with Starfleet.

"We're on our own in an entirely different quadrant of the galaxy. No cavalry is coming over the hillside. We need spare parts for the ship, what are we going to do?"

From the casting of Nichelle Nichols as Uhura in the original series to Avery Brooks as Cmdr. Sisko on *Deep Space Nine* and now Kate Mulgrew as Capt. Janeway on *Voyager*, *Star Trek* has a history of being progressive in its casting.

"In terms of being politically correct," says Russ, "they want to bring in the majority of the population to watch, and people like to see themselves on television. If a minority sees a minority, he'll watch it. People can identify with these characters — and beyond demographics, this is supposed to be the 24th century, by which time [race and gender] are no longer factors."

Nevertheless, Russ recognizes that minority and female characters could have been tokens who, like Uhura, did little more than sit in the background and answer the phone.

"It was a bold step to put Avery in command — and Janeway, for that matter, could have been just an officer on the ship," he says. "It's a bold step in both those shows, but that's the tradition of *Star Trek*. Gene Roddenberry broke a half dozen rules by putting minorities as officers on the bridge in a prime-time show at that time. It was unusual. So Janeway seems like the next logical step, relative to this day and age. Still, *Star Trek* has two groups of people who are unsatisfied so far: the gays and the disabled, both of whom would like to see regular characters representing them. Of course, given the nature of that century as realized in *Star Trek*, the fact is that most of the disabled probably would have been cured, and the gay issue simply would no longer be an issue."

But despite his infatuation with acting and *Trek*, it doesn't take long to discover his true calling, that of an activist. Russ would love to see *Voyager*'s scripts explore a variety of social and political issues. Scratch the Vulcan and one discovers that Russ' liberal heart bleeds like an out-of-control oil gusher.

"This is 1994 and AIDS is a worldwide epidemic, and they won't put a lousy condom ad on television," he says, referring to the networks' decision to pass on the national public-service campaign. "To me, [the networks' attitude] is unbelievably bizarre. It's stupid and ignorant in this day of unwanted pregnancies and AIDS. We live in the United States of America with the highest standard of living, and they won't put a lousy condom ad on TV. But they'll put sex all over the screen and violence up the wazoo. They will put the worship of material wealth and they'll reward greed and power. I'm not sure I understand that."

"What would the public do if they aired condom ads?" he asks, his peeve reaching its apex. "March on Washington? This population wouldn't march on a 7-11 store. I guess I just don't understand why someone will not take some kind of initiative and say, 'Screw

you, you tight-ass, conservative, right-wing clowns, go somewhere, get a life, do something, wake up and smell the toast burning."

Abandoning his carefully cultivated Vulcan reserve, Russ angrily lashes out at what he considers demagogic attacks on certain personal choices.

"Do people really want to go back to a time when everything was all set up for us and we didn't have to think for ourselves?" he asks. "For a country that screams so much about individual liberties, they go right against the grain as soon as it's something they don't like. We're talking about everything from textbooks that omit certain information important to our history because it made us look bad at one time to blasting single mothers. How can you criticize these things when it's just the reality of the day?"

Russ realizes he's strayed from the subject at hand. But he decides that, in a way, he hasn't. Though he expresses himself with less tolerance for opposing views than his TV show is likely to do, he recognizes the value of the political allegories and metaphors *Star Trek* has provided over the past 30 years.

"If a show like *Voyager* can address some of these issues, that's wonderful," he closes simply. "In fact, I welcome the opportunity. I hope the audience will too."

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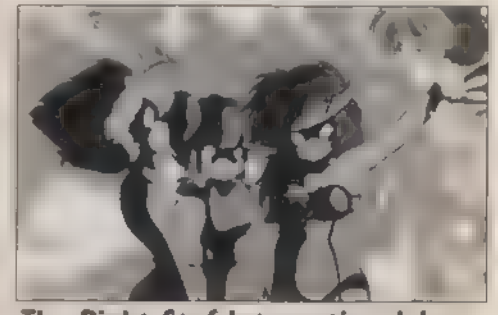

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GENERATIONS LOST

Was "Yesterday's Enterprise" the best opportunity to unite the two greatest captains in the Federation?

By Edward Gross

With the release of the motion picture *Star Trek Generations*, movie fans finally got to see Captain Kirk and Captain Picard together on the big screen. Unfortunately, the pairing was not the one that many had hoped for. Instead of the two captains working together to battle a common foe, Kirk was killed off in the first few minutes of the film, leaving Picard to deal with the villain on his own.

Though Rick Berman and the rest of the *Next Generation* creative team knew that they would have to kill Kirk sooner or later, they decided to do it in the seventh movie rather than the sixth because they felt that the time was right for the *TNG* cast to step out from the shadow of the original series.

Director David Carson felt the Kirk-less *Generations* was the perfect opportunity to do just that. "I thought it was a very good idea," he says. "I thought it was a very good way to get rid of the old guard and bring in the new guard. I thought it was a very good way to get rid of the old guard and bring in the new guard. I thought it was a very good way to get rid of the old guard and bring in the new guard.

YESTERDAY'S FLAGSHIP:
Enterprise

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

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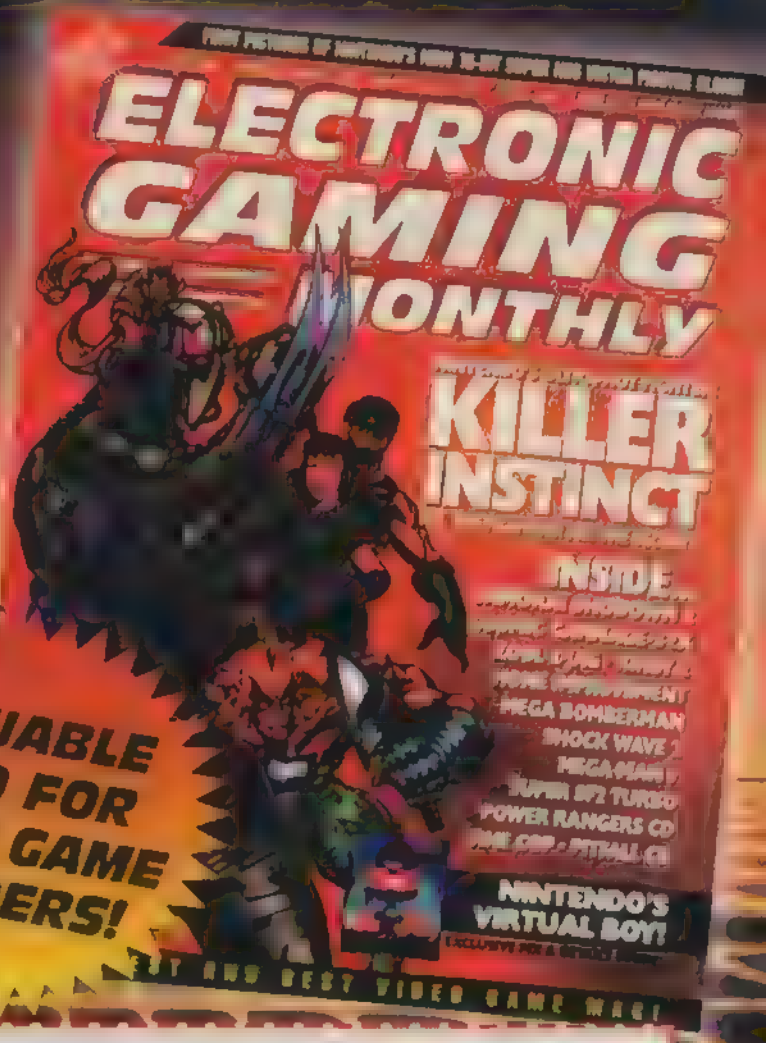

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MOVIESCAPE

EXCLUSIVE PREVIEWS OF MOVIES IN DEVELOPMENT

Lost in the *Shadow*

Can politics restart Charlie Sheen's career?

Charlie Sheen whose skydiving actioner *Terminal Velocity* dropped like a rock last fall has taken some drastic steps to revitalize his once promising career. He dumped his longtime agent and got a new one, who promptly got the actor $4 million to play the lead in the presidential thriller *The Shadow Program* which Hollywood insiders have described as George Stephanopoulos in *The Fugitive*.

Adi Hasak, who co-wrote *The Shadow Program* with Ric Gibbs said he got the idea for the story while watching last summer's *Speed*. "I thought it was a perfect Generation X character, and I thought 'What other genre can you put a young guy into?'" he told *Daily Variety*. "Then I thought of Stephanopoulos, a young guy who has the presidential ear. Let's put him on the run, chased by assassins as he tries to save the president's life."

Sheen told *Variety* that the script "represents the essence of what I've been hungry for. I am more than ready to remind people where I came from."

Since his breakthrough performance in Oliver Stone's *Platoon* in 1986, Charlie Sheen has appeared in 20 movies—but the average filmgoer probably hasn't seen or even heard of many of them. Remember *Backtrack*? How about *The Rookie*? Does *The Cadet* ring a bell? Probably not.

After a promising start in the mid-'80s, Sheen has fallen into the straight-to-cable spoof and sequel rut that would have already killed an actor without his Hollywood lineage. Movies like *Hot Shots Part Deux* and *Men at Work* [illegible] but even Sheen—the son of actor-activist Martin Sheen and brother of [illegible]—must realize that the [illegible].

Though *Terminal Velocity* only pulled in about $15 million in domestic ticket sales, the makers of *The Shadow Program* [illegible] with the A-list Mark

ALIEN: [illegible]

THE PLOT: [illegible]

THE PLAYERS: [illegible]
DISTRIBUTOR:
RELEASE DATE:

APOLLO-13

THE PLOT: [illegible]

THE PLAYERS: [illegible] Bill Paxton and Gary Sinise
THE DIRECTOR: Ron Howard
DISTRIBUTOR: [illegible]
RELEASE DATE: [illegible]

ARAGORN

THE PLOT: [illegible]

THE PLAYERS: Sean [illegible]
THE DIRECTOR: Richard Donner
DISTRIBUTOR: [illegible]
RELEASE DATE: [illegible]

BATMAN FOREVER

THE PLOT: Two-Face the [illegible] Carrey Chris [illegible] and Nicole Kidman
THE PLAYERS: Val Kilmer [illegible] Lee Jones Jim Carrey Chris [illegible] and Nicole Kidman
THE DIRECTOR: Joel Schumacher
DISTRIBUTOR: Warner Bros.
RELEASE DATE: Summer

BRAVEHEART

THE PLOT: Mel Gibson [illegible]

THE PLAYERS:
THE DIRECTOR:
DISTRIBUTOR:
RELEASE DATE:

CANDYMAN 2:

THE PLOT:

THE PLAYERS:

THE DIRECTOR:
DISTRIBUTOR:
RELEASE DATE:

CITY HALL

THE PLOT:

THE PLAYERS:

THE DIRECTOR:
DISTRIBUTOR:
RELEASE DATE:

CONGO

THE PLOT:

THE PLAYERS:

THE DIRECTOR:
DISTRIBUTOR:
RELEASE DATE:

CONTACT

THE PLOT:

THE PLAYERS:
THE DIRECTOR:
DISTRIBUTOR:
RELEASE DATE:

COPYCAT

THE PLOT:

THE PLAYERS:

THE DIRECTOR:
DISTRIBUTOR:
RELEASE DATE:

CRIMSON TIDE

THE PLOT:

THE PLAYERS:

THE DIRECTOR:
DISTRIBUTOR:
RELEASE DATE:

CUTTHROAT ISLAND

THE PLOT:

THE PLAYERS:

THE DIRECTOR:
DISTRIBUTOR:
RELEASE DATE:

THE DAM

THE PLOT:

THE PLAYERS:
THE DIRECTOR:
DISTRIBUTOR:
RELEASE DATE:

THE DAMOCLES NETWORK

THE PLOT:

THE PLAYERS:
THE DIRECTOR:
DISTRIBUTOR:
RELEASE DATE:

DIE HARD:

THE PLOT:

THE PLAYERS:

THE DIRECTOR:
DISTRIBUTOR:
RELEASE DATE:

DOOM

THE PLOT:

THE PLAYERS:
THE DIRECTOR:
DISTRIBUTOR:
RELEASE DATE:

DRAGONHEART

THE PLOT:

THE PLAYERS:

THE DIRECTOR:
DISTRIBUTOR:
RELEASE DATE:

CINESCOPE

LOU FERRIGNO

The rumbling you hear in L.A. isn't the latest seismic tremor or the new subway passing underfoot, but former *Incredible Hulk* star Lou Ferrigno muscling his way back into the limelight. Currently he's starring in *Cage II* (Capital Cities/ABC), a sequel to his 1989 actioner about a Vietnam vet who gets drafted into a savage, underground sport involving penned pugilism. And in a bid for bigger and better movie projects, he's been pumping up his performance skills on the theatre stage. "I've always taken up every challenge," says the fiercely self-disciplined Brooklyn native, who returned to competitive bodybuilding two years ago at the age of 42. "Sometimes it

takes 20 years to know what you're doing as an actor."

Having witnessed the filmic firepower of Arnold

knows what he'd *like* to be doing—namely, a thinking man's action movie "with more emotion and depth." But aside from the two shallow *Hercules* flicks he easily rippled through in the mid-'80s, few projects have been better suited to the imposing 300-pounder than the hit 1978-82 TV series *The Incredible Hulk*, based on Stan Lee's classic comic book. Ferrigno was so intimidating in his green get-up, in fact, that the cast and crew "would treat me like a creature from outer space."

Despite the passing of Bill Bixby, who played the Hulk's human alter ego David Banner, Ferrigno doesn't rule out a possible little-screen return for the superhero. Meanwhile, he's published an autobiographical book, *Lou Ferrigno's Guide to Personal Power, Bodybuilding and Fitness for Everyone* (available

child. And he'll continue looking for ways to break muscle-bound type. "I'll take a good part in a good film—like a comedy," he says. "And I feel that, when the time is right, I'm going to have

MOVIESCAPE

[illegible]

THE PLOT

THE PLAYERS.

THE DIRECTOR
DISTRIBUTOR: Warner Bro
RELEASE DATE: TBD

THE FANTASTIC FOUR

THE PLOT.
Four in a big-budg
THE PLAYERS
THE DIRECTOR.
DISTRIBUTOR: 20th Century Fox
RELEASE DATE:

[illegible]

THE PLOT

THE PLAYERS:

THE DIRECTOR.
DISTRIBUTOR
RELEASE DATE

GODZILLA

THE PLOT.

THE PLAYERS
THE DIRECTOR:
DISTRIBUTOR: TriStar
RELEASE DATE: TBD

[illegible]

THE PLOT: Bond is back, this time wit

THE PLAYERS. Brosnan and

THE DIRECTOR.
DISTRIBUTOR
RELEASE DATE: November 1995 (est

[illegible]

THE PLOT

THE PLAYERS
THE DIRECTOR
DISTRIBUTOR
RELEASE DATE

INDIANA JONES 4

THE PLOT: No storyline yet, but Ford
THE PLAYERS on Ford
THE DIRECTOR
DISTRIBUTOR
RELEASE DATE

THE ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU

THE PLOT

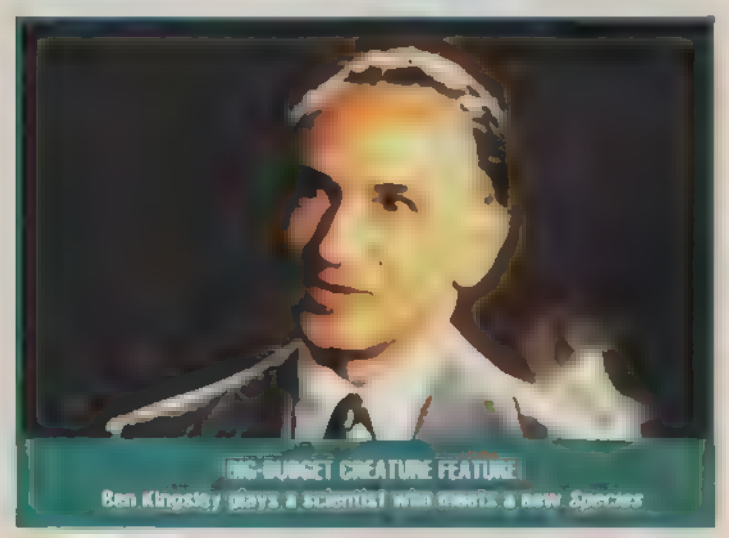
THE PLAYERS
THE DIRECTOR
DISTRIBUTOR
RELEASE DATE

JUMP

THE PLOT Fiorentino a quiet
Carpenter
THE PLAYERS: Linda Fiorent
z Palmieri
THE DIRECTOR: Sidney Furie
DISTRIBUTOR: TBD.
RELEASE DATE: TBD

JUDGE DREDD

THE PLOT
comic about a bloodt
THE PLAYERS
Armand Assante, Diane Lane, Rob
Schneider, Joan Chen, Max von S
and Henry Ro
THE DIRECTOR
DISTRIBUTOR
RELEASE DATE: Summer 1995



BIG-BUDGET CREATURE FEATURE
Ben Kingsley plays a scientist who meets a new species

[illegible]

THE PLOT

THE PLAYERS
THE DIRECTOR
DISTRIBUTOR
RELEASE DATE

JUMANJI

THE PLOT

THE PLAYERS
THE DIRECTOR
DISTRIBUTOR
RELEASE DATE

JUST CAUSE

THE PLOT

THE PLAYERS
THE DIRECTOR
DISTRIBUTOR
RELEASE DATE

LAWNMOWER MAN 2

THE PLOT
ures from the orig
THE PLAYERS: Austin O'Brien
THE DIRECTOR: Farhad Mar
DISTRIBUTOR New Li
RELEASE DATE TBD

MAN WITH THE FOOTBALL

THE PLOT: Nuclear footba
ed by an angry scientist
THE PLAYERS: TBD
THE DIRECTOR: Sidney Lumet
DISTRIBUTOR: Warner Br
RELEASE DATE: Fall 19

MELTDOWN

THE PLOT
rpenter, follows a ter
able results
THE PLAYERS Lundgren
THE DIRECTOR John Dah
DISTRIBUTOR
RELEASE DATE TBD

MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE

THE PLOT: Another 1960s TV show
government ops
THE PLAYERS: Tom Cruis
THE DIRECTOR: Brian De Palma
DISTRIBUTOR
RELEASE DATE

THE MONEY TRAIN

THE PLOT in New York City transit
ops find themselves in the middle of a
THE PLAYERS: Woody Harrelson and
THE DIRECTOR
DISTRIBUTOR
RELEASE DATE

[illegible]

THE PLOT: *Highlander*'s Chris pher Lambert leads the MK gang in their first
THE PLAYERS: Christopher Lambert, Linden Ashby, Talisa Soto, Robin Shou, Can-Hiroyuki Tagawa and Bridgette Wilson
THE DIRECTOR: Paul Anderson
DISTRIBUTOR: New Line
RELEASE DATE: Summer 1995 (est

MR. FITCH

THE PLOT: A modern-day Frankenstein genetic experiment gone awr
THE PLAYERS: Rutger Hauer
THE DIRECTOR: Roger Avary
DISTRIBUTOR
RELEASE DATE

THE NET

THE PLOT obic compute
nerd is pursued by government assassin
ffer stumbl on-line secret
THE PLAYERS Sandra Bullock
THE DIRECTOR Irwin Winkler
DISTRIBUTOR: Columbia
RELEASE DATE

OUTBREAK

THE PLOT: A deadly virus hits wa
unleash it onto the
THE PLAYERS: Dustin Hoffman
Freeman and Rene Russo
THE DIRECTOR: Wolfgang Petersc
DISTRIBUTOR Bros
RELEASE DATE TBD

THE PHANTOM

THE PLOT: From the syndicated comic "the ghost that walks" comes to life
THE PLAYERS: Billy Zane and Cameron Diaz
THE DIRECTOR: Joe Dante
DISTRIBUTOR: [illegible]
RELEASE DATE: June 30, 1995 (tent.)

ROB ROY

THE PLOT: Liam Neeson stars as a swashbuckling Scottish nobleman
THE PLAYERS: Liam Neeson
THE DIRECTOR: Michael Caton-Jones
DISTRIBUTOR: United Artists
RELEASE DATE: Summer 1995 (tent.)

SEVEN

THE PLOT: Busy Brad Pitt stars in this thriller with Morgan Freeman. David Fincher (*Alien 3*) is behind the camera
THE PLAYERS: Brad Pitt and Morgan Freeman
THE DIRECTOR: David Fincher
DISTRIBUTOR: New Line
RELEASE DATE: TBD

SPECIES

THE PLOT: An encoded message from [illegible] gives scientists the DNA blueprints to create a hornfic monster. Alien designs by Swiss artist H.R. Giger
THE PLAYERS: Ben Kingsley, Michael Madsen and Forest Whitaker
THE DIRECTOR: Ronald Donaldson
DISTRIBUTOR: MGM/UA
RELEASE DATE: Summer 1995

STAR LEGION

THE PLOT: This science-fiction flick [illegible] location in "Latvia"
THE PLAYERS: TBD
THE DIRECTOR: [illegible]
DISTRIBUTOR: TBD
RELEASE DATE: TBD

STAR WARS (Episode 1)

THE PLOT: Lucas takes us to where it all began. In this first installment, young Anakin Skywalker's conversion to the Dark Side begins
THE PLAYERS: TBD
THE DIRECTOR: TBD
DISTRIBUTOR: LucasFilm
RELEASE DATE: 1998 (tent.)

STARSHIP TROOPERS

THE PLOT: A $60 million epic based on the Robert Heinlein novel
THE PLAYERS: TBD
THE DIRECTOR: TBD
DISTRIBUTOR: TriStar
RELEASE DATE: TBD

STRANGE DAYS

THE PLOT: A futuristic thriller written by James Cameron
THE PLAYERS: [illegible] Lewis and [illegible] Bassett
THE DIRECTOR: Kathryn Bigelow
DISTRIBUTOR: 20th Century Fox
RELEASE DATE: TBD

T. REX

THE PLOT: Whoopi Goldberg stars in this tale of a T. Rex that returns from extinction to stalk the big screen
THE PLAYERS: Whoopi Goldberg
THE DIRECTOR: Jonathan Betuel
DISTRIBUTOR: Columbia
RELEASE DATE: TBD

THE TWELVE MONKEYS

THE PLOT: Bruce Willis plays a convict who'll get a reprieve if he can successfully fight off a virus that could wipe out Earth
THE PLAYERS: Bruce Willis, Brad Pitt and [illegible]eleine Stowe
THE DIRECTOR: Terry Gilliam
DISTRIBUTOR: Universal
RELEASE DATE: TBD

UNDER SIEGE 2: Dark Territory

THE PLOT: Eric Bogosian replaces Gary Busey as the train-jacking villain
THE PLAYERS: Steven Seagal
THE DIRECTOR: Geoff Murphy
DISTRIBUTOR: Warner Bros.
RELEASE DATE: TBD

VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED

THE PLOT: Horror guru John Carpenter's re-make of the 1960 classic
THE PLAYERS: Christopher Reeve, Kirstie Alley and Mark Hamill
THE DIRECTOR: John Carpenter
DISTRIBUTOR: Universal
RELEASE DATE: TBD

VIRTUOSITY

THE PLOT: Denzel Washington tracks an evil ghost in the machine
THE PLAYERS: Denzel Washington
THE DIRECTOR: Brett Leonard
DISTRIBUTOR: Paramount
RELEASE DATE: TBD

WATERWORLD

THE PLOT: Kevin Costner sports gills in this post-apocalyptic aquatic tale
THE PLAYERS: Kevin Costner, Jeanne Tripplehorn and Dennis Hopper
THE DIRECTOR: Kevin Reynolds
DISTRIBUTOR: Universal
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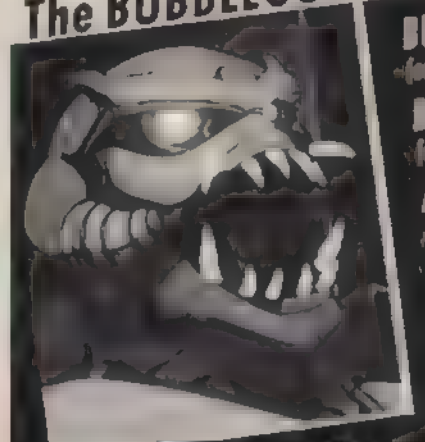

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False Truths

James Cameron may have tried to sell True Lies *as an action-comedy, but the joke's on him*

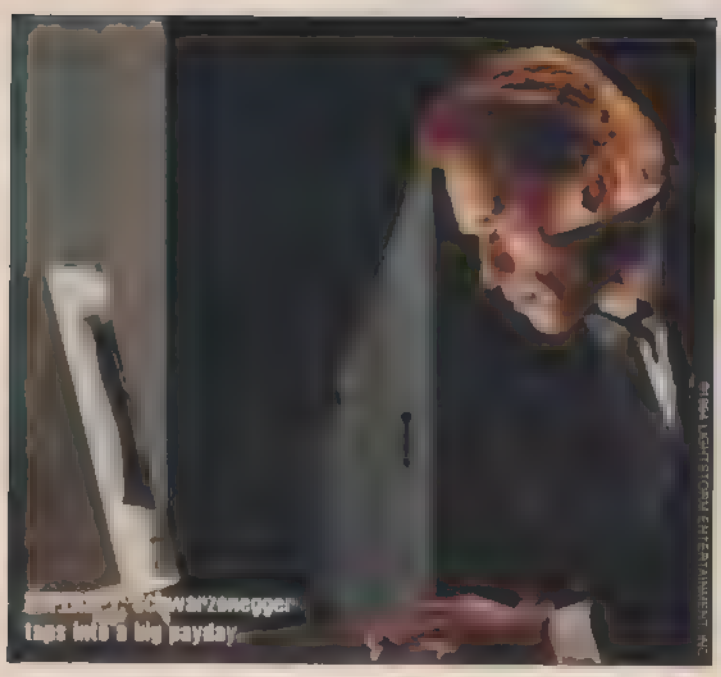
Here are the real true lies about *True Lies* (Fox). It's a hugely profitable blockbuster (it made about $150 million domestically, but it cost over $100 million). It's James Cameron at his best (it manages to make his miscalculations and excesses in *The Abyss* seem less abysmal). And it's a breathlessly-paced action-comedy (it makes *Last Action Hero* look like a nonstop laugh riot).

True Lies is escapist fare, all right—for those in a persistent vegetative state. But even if it *were* trying to be an affectionate send-up of the spy thriller, what is there to send up? Virtually every action hero from James Bond to John McClane has been sequelled into self-parody. So there isn't much left for Arnold Schwarzenegger, as not-so-special agent Harry Tasker, to do. Not that Cameron doesn't work like a demon to create something: The film's rousing opening number, in which Harry performs a smooth wet suit-to-tuxedo infiltration of a Swiss chateau, strikes the right balance of slick action and dry wit—and introduces Tasker's initially likable partner, Gib (Tom Arnold). But the film devolves into a decidedly schizophrenic enterprise that flops awkwardly between the main action involving a Middle Eastern terrorist named Aziz (Art Malik) and a painfully overwrought "subplot" about Harry's sexually frustrated wife, Helen (Jamie Lee Curtis).

That schizoid quality also applies to Tasker himself—not just in his double life as a spy and a family man, but in his very personality. The character starts out suave enough. Though capable of instigating extreme carnage, he's funny and possessed of a disarmingly polite style all his own. But soon, in between bouts of effusive apology ("Sorry ... excuse me ... sorry," he says, as he pursues Aziz on horseback through a crowded hotel lobby), crudities that are most un-Harrylike, not to mention un-Arnoldlike, pepper his dialogue. While it's nice to know that action heroes can have flaws, too, even James Bond knows that you get more respect for bad puns than for bad language.

Part of this can be blamed on the near-constant and corruptive influence of the thrice-divorced Gib, whose thudding big line, "Women—can't live with 'em, can't kill 'em," pretty much sums up the attitude toward females in the film. The abuses are such that you can't help but tally them as the story unfolds: Tia Carrere as the nefarious art dealer Juno, is slapped viciously twice and called a "biscuit," a "bitch" and a "psychopathic bitch" repeatedly by various characters (a bit much, even if she does deserve some of it). Even Harry's 14-year-old daughter suffers some undeservedly harsh knocks, particularly when Gib tries to convince Tasker—only semi-jokingly—that she's stealing her father's money for drugs and an abortion. This is joyless, unclever and just-plain too-easy scripting from a talent who has demonstrated far superior wit in the past.

Cameron's biggest lapse occurs about 45 minutes in, when the main terrorist plot gives way—for nearly an



hour!—to a stock plot that plays like an especially episode of the old TV spy spoof *Get Smart*. Tasker, mindful of the phatic communion that his once loving marriage has become as a result of his devotion to work, makes a feeble effort to mend his relationship with Helen only to discover that she has begun an affair with a slimy used car salesman (a woeful Bill Paxton). He summarily enlists Gib and several other colleagues to help him "kidnap" Helen then he interrogates his wife into professing her love for him in a scene that is by turns chilling in its chauvinistic entitlement (it is, after all, Harry's fault for Helen's sexual starvation in the first place). It also paints Tasker as a coward so that he can mask and ride to the rescue in a manner to do what he should have done in the first place.

Jamie Lee Curtis, caught in a thankless role but still the best actor in a movie that's so bad it makes Tom Arnold look good, is humiliated further as Tasker drafts Helen into service as an operative in the guise of a prostitute. The protracted hotel-room [illegible] that follows is an [illegible] attempt to [illegible] appears intent on [illegible] Helen once and for all from her [illegible] though, is extremely unsavory, particularly when Cameron [illegible] has Helen fall on her back [illegible]

director [illegible] to [illegible]

But Helen [illegible] of the film's [illegible] themes and Aziz [illegible] the roots of [illegible] plot. The [illegible] launches the final 30 minutes of bang-up stunts that return [illegible] Yet [illegible] to [illegible] back [illegible] Tasker [illegible] Helen [illegible] that [illegible] is Aziz's hostage [illegible] as sympathetic market [illegible] once. Yet one finds it [illegible] to invest emotionally in Digital Domain's painstaking [illegible] work, which would have been even more impressive had the Harrier sequence been [illegible]

As it is, we see that his FX [illegible] Cameron attempts [illegible] Harrier [illegible] Bill Paxton [illegible] on the [illegible] by the same actor in Cameron [illegible] *Aliens*: "Game over, man! Game over!" —*Dean Tamanna*

SHADOW BOXING

The Shadow (Universal) is a helpful how-to guide for Hollywood producers who are looking to make expensive bad movies.

First, spend more time on sets and costumes than on plot and characters. And second, design your special effects sequences so that the viewer's first instinct is to shout "Fake!"

In this misbegotten update of the popular 1930s radio serial, Alec Baldwin plays Lamont Cranston, a New York playboy with a secret past and hidden powers. As the Shadow, Cranston can hypnotize and control people, a power he uses only to do good.

Baldwin does not have the weight to convey the character's mystery, despite his efforts to knit his brow and look troubled. And he isn't helped by the script, which is plagued by schizophrenia—it doesn't know whether it wants to be an Indiana Jones-style adventure flick or a featherweight drawing-room comedy. The most goofily surreal moment in the film comes when the Shadow's nemesis, a bloodthirsty descendent of Genghis Khan, pauses during a showdown with the Shadow to admire his tie.

Penelope Ann Miller adds a bit of much-needed brightness as Cranston's love interest, and Jonathan Winters shows up though he doesn't know why. —*Mo Ryan*

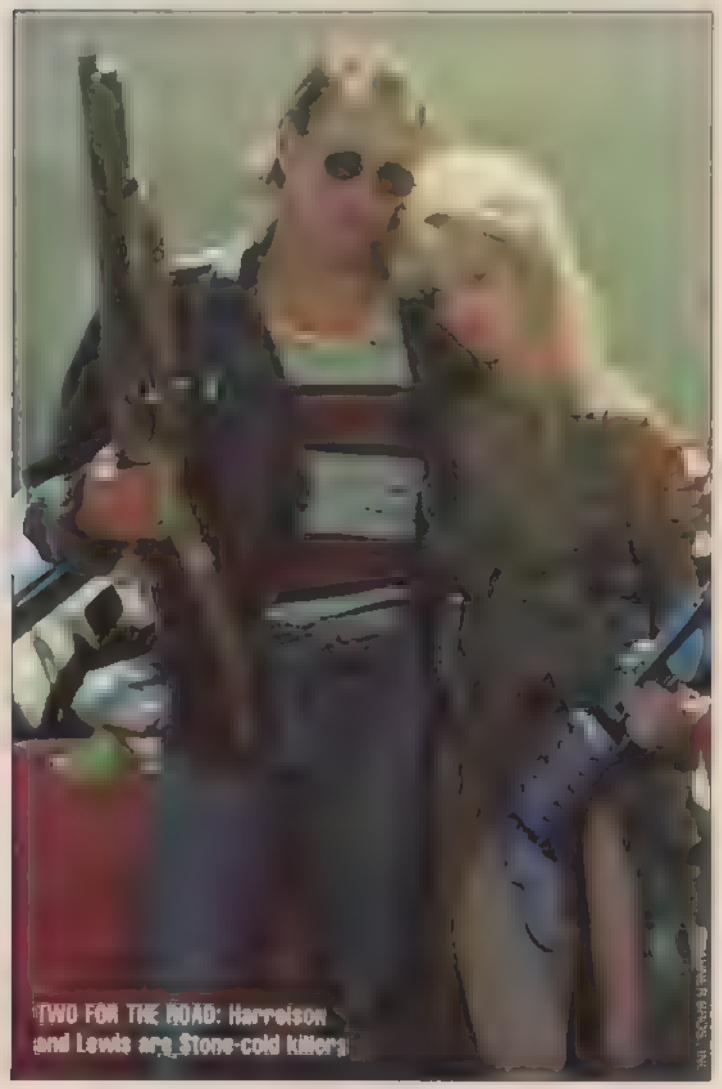
Natural Born Killers

Warner Bros.

Because his work stands out from the deadly sameness of most Hollywood commercial fare, some critics have decided that Oliver Stone is a genius. But like a sudden shrill falsetto in a moment of passion, his films draw attention to themselves—but not necessarily because they are great accomplishments.

Natural Born Killers—Stone's proclaimed attempt to satirize American social pathology—is nothing more than an extended bad joke. To this most self-conscious of directors, nothing is beyond presenting on screen because everything is a public service, every outrageous image is a deafening clarion call to wake up to the lies that we all supposedly live with.

The movie follows two lovebird outlaws on a cross-country killing spree. Mickey (Woody Harrelson) and Mallory (Juliette Lewis) become celebrities for their murders, pop-mythic heroes for the mentally impaired. They are, of course, nothing more than cartoons. Oliver Ov[illegible]



TWO FOR THE ROAD: Harrelson and Lewis are Stone-cold killers.

whacked out on speed, joining up with the Tazmanian devil for a hellaciously orgiastic night on the town.

Stone's target is impossible to miss. Americans' bloodlust and the media's complicity in promoting it. "These two motherf—ers are a walking reminder of just how f—ed up this system really is," declares the prison warden (Tommy Lee Jones) in one of his more languid moments.

But what does it mean to send up something that is already an in-your-face joke? And Stone isn't just needling us, he's lecturing. His art has the rotten smell of piousness, of arrogant ignorance. Creatively, Stone is a bully and, like most bullies, a coward. He has no use for history or honesty (witness *JFK*)—he'd rather shock us through repulsive and emotionally charged images.

Almost 40 years ago, two vicious nitwits named Eugene Hickock and Perry Smith became media darlings by killing the Clutter family in rural Kansas just for the hell of it. "It wasn't anything the Clutters did," one of them told author Truman Capote. "They never hurt me. Like people have all my life. Maybe it's just that the Clutters were the ones who had to pay for it." We're not really sure who hurt Oliver Stone. (Perhaps the CIA, which he believed assassinated his beloved JFK? How about LBJ for sending him to fight in Vietnam?) What we certainly do know is that filmgoers are paying for it.—*Frieda Nooe*

Clear And Present Danger

Paramount

Clear and Present Danger, the third Tom Clancy adventure to reach the big screen, begins impressively with the drug-related murder of a close friend of the president. Soon thereafter, CIA star Jack Ryan (Harrison Ford) is elevated to acting deputy director of intelligence when his mentor, Adm. James Greer (James Earl Jones), becomes gravely ill.

The movie is at its best when visualizing Clancy's descriptions of Byzantine political maneuvering, quickly hits full stride as the characters play cat-and-mouse bureaucratic games after the president greenlights an illegal paramilitary operation. Ryan has promised Congress that no American troops will be engaged against the Colombian drug cartel and, when he finds out they are already there, he has to blindly dance for his life and career like Anthony Perkins in *The Trial*.

Looking always harried and put-upon, Ford once again plays the Last Honorable Man with absolute conviction. But in his second turn as Jack Ryan, the actor gets little help from a schizophrenic script that finally abandons Clancy's complicated Washington-based tale in favor of an old-fashioned shoot-'em-up.

Penned by John Milius, Donald Stewart and Steven Zaillian, the film not only fails to tell a coherent story, it cannot even clearly define its villains. The hawk-eyed and aggressive mercenary Willem Dafoe is a loose cannon—but he quickly shows he has a heart of gold; the murderous drug king (Miguel Sandoval) seems like the natural bad guy, but he's really just a baseball-loving oaf who dotes on his precious daughter and doesn't understand why everyone's picking on him; and the lizard-eyed American national security advisor just wants to make his president happy. So final villain status is reserved—late in the game—for a sneaky Latin lawyer-lover (Joaquim de

Midnight Howler

Amanda), who snaps the neck of [illegible] with [illegible] knew to scream and hiss when he appears.

Curiously, the movie was [illegible] perfectly—once the scenery shifts [illegible] to the [illegible] of South America. Ryan's initial [illegible] Columbia [illegible] is [illegible] by [illegible] up [illegible] to let [illegible] But [illegible] let's applaud [illegible] and [illegible] through the picture. Velvet

lifeless dialogue follows, the [illegible] to [illegible] about the plot, leading ever so slowly to [illegible] and (hee-hee) the town drunk [illegible]

[illegible] ple mill about with nothing [illegible] Ryan's patient [illegible] Ryan's [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

Aliens Among Us

Dropped by the Fox network four years ago, the Newcomers are back for new Alien Nation *movies*

cred reviving it as a series of TV movies. But former Fox chairman Barry "Killer" Diller didn't like the show so plans got no further than a halt. Last year, however, Foxstar Productions, an in-house entity, began looking for projects that would be appropriate for the network's Tuesday night movie. With the Diller veto removed, *Alien Nation* was moved to the front burner and calls were placed to Johnson and the TV show's stars Gary Graham, Sikes, and Eric Pierpoint, Francisco, resulting in *Dark Horizon*.

The first new film, *Alien Nation: Body & Soul*, focuses on a villain who had been performing bizarre experiments on slaves onboard the ship that accidentally brought the aliens to Earth.

"What we're trying to do is deal with geniuses in society and whether or not they should receive special considerations," says Johnson. The movie explores the 'Overseers' of the alien slave world and those who worked for and with them. But their genius at their various expertises—if that word can be used in that way—makes them valuable commodities to the government and private enterprise here on this planet. So the question is: Should one take advantage of these resourceful people or should they indeed be treated as criminals? It's an intriguing subject. In the course of that we will discover that there are large portions of the slave ship still existing that the government has hidden away.

He says that this provides an opportunity for the film's creator to capitalize on the alien imagery that can be created organically and naturally. "The advantage we have over *The X-Files* is that our aliens are right here in your face," Johnson says with a laugh.

The second movie in the works, *Dangerous Portal*, deals with a religious device that creates a virtual-reality world in which the user can transport to various alien environments. Designed to aid in spiritual enlightenment, it can be dangerously addictive if used incorrectly. And when it falls into the hands of a cult leader, it becomes deadly.

It's set in the last week of the millennium, December 1999, when the world is going nuts anyway," says Johnson. "Some people think it's the end of the world, some people think the aliens are the new Christ coming to save us, and others think the Newcomers are spawns of Satan. What the story's about, really, is society's growing need for instant gratification, and that's going to resonate through the whole story. The portal itself is designed to be used like a Zen Master would use a teaching tool. You have to learn how to use it. If you decide to study the martial arts, you can't become a black belt overnight.

The problem is that George's son Buck, and a lot of the other people who are sucked into this cult want enlightenment and they want it now.

And the theme doesn't stop at the doors of the cult: everyone in the movie faces it. "Matthew Sikes is finally retaking his Detective-2 exam," he adds, "and he has to write a research report and discovers this computer program called 'Term Writer' in which you write a few things, enter your resources and it writes your paper. George has always been caught up in technology, he has to have the newest computer. His wife, Susan, is always on his case, saying, George, you've got to get away from this slave mentality.' At the same time, Susan is working in advertising which is about—guess what?—instant gratification.

One particular scene that Johnson enjoys has Sikes and Cathy watching the first episode of *Amos* [illegible] sitcom starring stand-up comedian who has done very well on Letterman.

"The show's on a minute and a half," Johnson smiles, "and a slide comes up that says 'We're sorry, but instantaneous national Nielsens indicate that there's very low viewership and low interest, so we are happy to present, instead, *The* [illegible]." Sikes grunts and says, "He should have given it a chance. They should have waited for the next commercial." The whole problem of instant gratification is pervasive in our whole society.

Each of these films, as well as the potential third film *Time Bombs*, Johnson points out, serve the same overall purpose that the television series did, which is to explore the human condition as it's mirrored by this alien society.

"We can work metaphorically to really take a long look at ourselves," he says. "That, to me, is what *Alien Nation* does best: to comment on ourselves and our society, and ultimately—hopefully—to bring the two species together so that we can see that our similarities are more important than [illegible] difference[illegible]

Howard [illegible]

TOGETHER AGAIN: Detective Francisco (Eric Pierpoint), his family and Detective Sikes (Gary Graham, right).

TUNED IN!

by Andy Mangels

The [illegible] fiction/action genre has become the hottest in television. With the networks and syndicators vying for the large but demanding genre audience, *CINESCAPE* has asked well-known Hollywood correspondent Andy Mangels to offer us a taste every month of the best of what's coming up.—*Ed*

ABC

Halfway through the show's second season, super villains are providing the Man of Steel with ratings power, as *Lois & Clark: The New Adventures Of Superman* has muscled into a strong second in its time slot. Coming up, Superman becomes blind on "The Eyes Have It" (Jan. 22), while Farrah Forke returns as Maxson Drake (from "Church of Metropolis"). Then a romantic story arc between Lois and Clark heats things up starting with "The Phoenix" (Feb. 5). But that's not all that's hot. John Shea returns as Lex Luthor, and he and Gretchen Kelly (Denise Crosby) are out for Lois and Superman's blood! As if things weren't bad enough, an ambitious TV reporter (Raquel Welch) unmasks the man of steel in "Top Copy" (Feb. 19), and Bronson Pinchot is once again featured in "Return of the Prankster" (Feb. 26) with a device that freezes people temporarily.

PLAN OF STEEL: A super [illegible] for Lois and Clark

CBS

CBS's only genre series are on Saturday mornings. This fall look for new animated series including *The Mask* (13 episodes, with voice by Rob Paulsen), *Around The World With Pumbaa and Timon* (Disney's *Lion King* spin-off) (13 episodes) and *Gargoyles* (13 new episodes).

NBC

A winter storm strands the cast of *Earth 2* underneath a strange, biospheric dome in "Moon Cross" (Jan. 22), while Bess must establish a trading system with the natives in "Natural Born Grendlers" (Feb. 5). Preempted for a week, the series continues with "Better Living Through Morganite—Pts. 1 & 2" (Feb. 19 & 26), as unsettling earthquakes bring a valuable ore to the surface, and Yale's behavior becomes erratic.

Not much news on *seaQuest DSV*'s upcoming episodes, but expect the best of the season to show up for sweeps. It starts out with "And Everything Nice" (Jan. 22), as Lucas falls in love.

FOX

The long-awaited animated *Spider-Man* is set to premiere on Feb. 4. Likely running order will be "The Sting of the Scorpion" (Feb. 4), "The Spider-Slayer Part 1" (Feb. 11), "The Return of the Spider-Slayers—Pt. 2" (Feb. 18), and "The Menace Of Mysterio" (Feb. 25). The show will feature guest villains—and guest voices—galore: Mark Hamill is Hobgoblin, Efram Zimbalist Jr. is Doctor Octopus and Martin Landau is the Scorpion. And if you didn't catch it on the November "preview" show, who is gruff newspaper editor J. Jonah Jameson? None other than Ed Asner, famed *Lou Grant* star.

B5 REVIVES: Bruce [illegible] Boxleitner steers a new

As you may already know, Fox has picked up the revival of *Get Smart*, airing Sunday nights since Jan. 8. The new version features Don Adams and Barbara Feldon from the classic mid-'60s spy spoof series.

Fox has several intriguing new series set as mid-season replacements. *VR* (a.k.a. *Avenging Angel*) stars Lori Singer as a woman who fights crime in the virtual-reality world of computer crime. Michael Easton also stars. Eleven episodes start in March. *Sliders*, a science-fiction/alternate-reality series will also air mid-season. And, on the heels of *The X-Files*' popularity, Fox has picked up Laurel Entertainment's miniseries revival of the '60s' sci-fi series *The Invaders*. Jim Parriot wrote the script. No airdates had been planned at press time.

Coming up on the no-airdates-available *M.A.N.T.I.S.*, Miles Hawkins is kidnapped and cloned by geneticist Michael Angelides (genre star Vincent Schiavelli) in "Progenitor," at which point the Jackal and the

Spider-Clone become ... oops, wrong bug-hero series. In the shocking "Switches," a killer is executed in the electric chair, but his spirit goes into Port Columbia's power grid, enabling him to "possess" the Seapod and the M.A.N.T.I.S. exoskeleton! A magician/hypnotist is out for revenge against abusive parents in "The Delusionist," and is M.A.N.T.I.S. time-traveling again in the episode "Fast Forward," or just borrowing a title from *The Flash*?

SYNDICATED AND CABLE

Warner and Steven Spielberg are teaming up yet again, this time with *Batman TAS* producers Bruce Timm and Paul Dini. The new series, *Freakazoid!* will be an action/adventure/comedy series featuring a geeky high school kid who's caught in a science experiment gone awry. He emerges with powers like the Mask, and a visage not unlike the Joker *Freakazoid!* will have 13 episodes and will air on Saturdays, along with 13 new *Animaniacs!*, on the Warner network that is launching this fall.

All-new *Babylon 5* episodes will air from mid-January through February, but the exact schedule was unknown at press time. "A Race Through Dark Places" (likely Jan. 23) guest-stars Walter Koenig as he teams up with Talia to find an underground railroad of unregistered telepaths.

The syndicated vampire hit *Forever Knight* is airing all-new shows for sweeps, including Nick getting trapped in his subconscious in "Near Death" (week of Jan. 30-Feb. 5), and the search for a serial killer in "Crazy Love" (week of Feb. 6-12). Nick must stop a female vampire from conceiving a child in "Baby, Baby" (week of Feb. 13-19), while Nick's partner moves in with him and hogs the action in "Partners of the Month" (week of Feb. 20-26).

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine will air all-new episodes from Jan. 30 to Feb. 27.

ITC and Bohbot have joined to produce a half-hour live action/puppet series for syndication, which debuted on Dec. 18. If you haven't found it yet, *Turbocharged Thunderbirds* combines new live-action segments with the puppetry of the old *Thunderbirds* supermarionation series from England. Tripp and Roxette Hackmaster (relative newcomers Travis Wester and Johna Stewart) have blundered into an alternate universe, a place where the Tracy family and the International Rescue teams fight the Atrocimator and his forces of evil. *Turbocharged Thunderbirds* will air in some markets as part of the *Amazin!*

Adventures hour. Look for 13 episodes of the show.

Star Trek: Voyager zooms into its initial run following its debut last month on the new United Paramount Network.

TekWar, starring Greg Evigan, premiered its regular one-hour series on USA Network on Jan. 7, although the series airs Monday nights at 10 p.m. Coming up, a powerful Teklord creates a computer-generated "Alter Ego" (Jan. 30) meaning trouble for Jake and Sid, and a terrorist takes over WeatherCon, threatening the Earth in "Stay Of Execution" Feb. 6. The series is preempted on Feb. 13 but returns for "Killer Instinct" (Feb. 20), in which a hacker has introduced a computer virus into virtual-reality games, turning kids into horrific killers.

The season finale of HBO's *Tales From The Crypt*, "You Murderer," is directed by Robert *Forrest Gump*) Zemeckis and stars John Lithgow, Isabella Rosellini and—thanks to digital technology—Humphrey Bogart. It is scheduled to run sometime in February. ◆

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The art side of the Force

Del Rey chronicles the creation of George Lucas' universe

Did you think the Rebel Alliance's greatest weapons was an afterthought?

Originally designed for a few establishing shots, Vaders Destroyer a.k.a. the Executor evolved into one of the film's central locations. Once the ten-foot-long model was placed in front of the camera [illegible] lights above the star decks were cranked up to look like the Executor of the major scenes in *The Empire Strikes Back*.

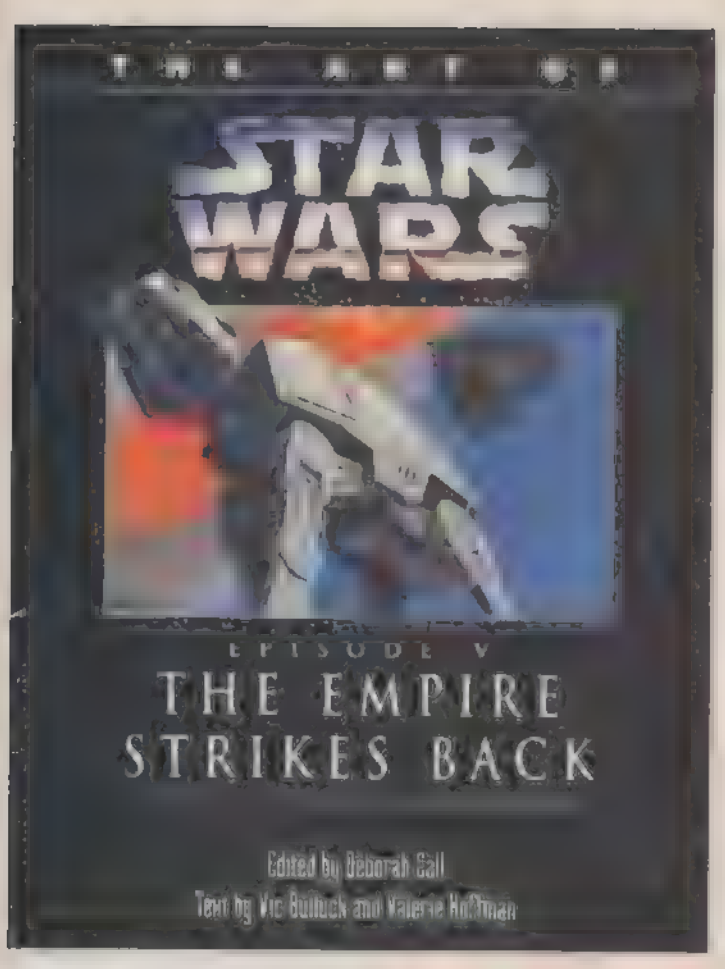
Such insights have a common place in this excellent book series from Del Rey.

Bridging the 12-year gap since the last *Star Wars* film, this reissued, three-book series, entitled *The Art of Star Wars*, is an indispensible companion for aficionados of the film trilogy.

The artwork selected for these books [illegible] excellent Ralph McQuarrie pencil sketches of [illegible] interactive creature [illegible] capturing a key dramatic scene, the art reminds us of why *Star Wars* captured our imagination 18 years ago.

Besides the drawn and painted art [illegible] creatures are also featured prominently in the series. Learn how these small [illegible] to create the incredibly realistic bug-eyed behemoths before your eyes.

A New Hope, the first of the series's seven episode IV, [illegible] George Lucas's original [illegible] The book includes preliminary artwork in sketched form and finished production work in full color matte paintings. Not only does it include the script, the characters and the artwork, but *A New Hope* also features movie


THE ART OF
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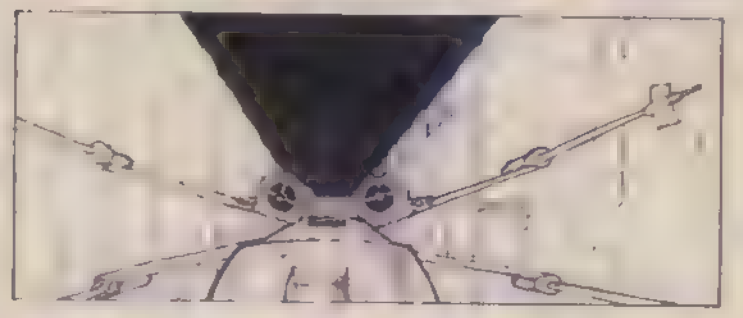
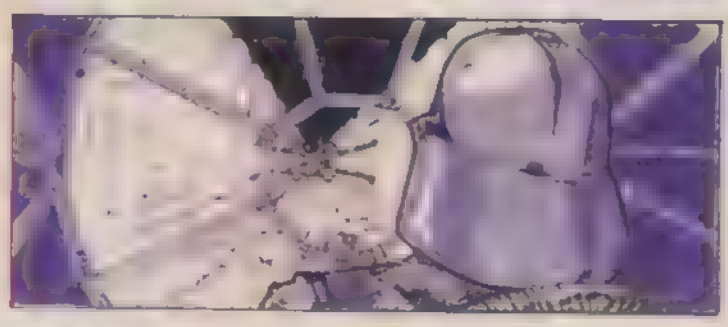
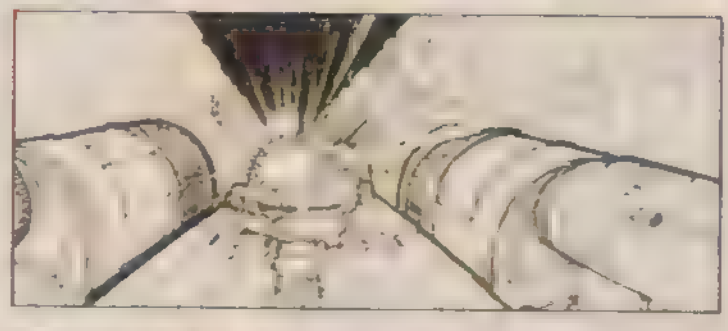
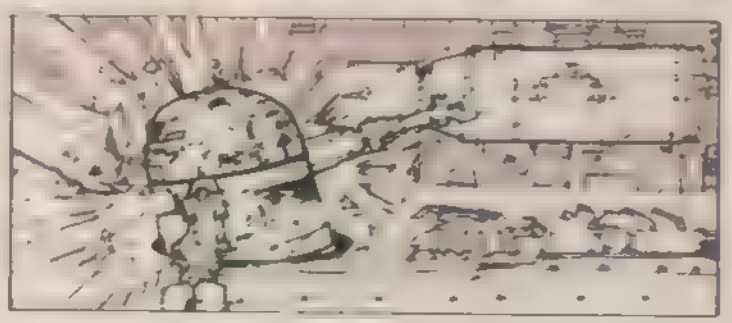
EPISODE V
THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK
Edited by Deborah Call
Text by Vic Bullock and Valerie Hoffman









Motel Hell...

The dead dance in the rockin' cyberpunk mystery theater, MTV's Club Dead

A few years ago Viacom, parent company of Nickelodeon and MTV, decided that it wanted to leap head-first into the still-nascent world of interactive entertainment. In doing so, it correctly predicted that CD-ROM was the technology of the future, and sought out a team of software developers already experienced in the medium and with a knowledge of film and video technology. The media giant found exactly what it was looking for in ICOM Simulations, an Illinois-based company responsible for the *Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective* series and the CD-ROM hit *Dracula Unleashed*.

ICOM became Viacom New Media and began to create products that would maintain the level of quality of its previous titles as well as reflect the Viacom image of big-time innovation. Among the first games produced by VNM are *Nickelodeon's Are You Afraid of the Dark: The Tale of Orpheo's Curse* and *Nickelodeon's Director's Lab*. Also recently released is *MTV's Club Dead*.

According to VNM's Al Nilsen, creating products that carry the MTV label can be a daunting challenge. The MTV network reinvents itself every six months or so, says Nielsen, in its effort to stay in front of the ever-changing attitudes of teenagers, its core audience. The products being produced in the multimedia CD-ROM world, however, usually take from 12 to 18 months.

Thus, Nilsen says he feels as if VNM's game designers, producers and directors need a crystal ball to predict what MTV is going to be like several transformations into the future. Each MTV he-in runs a serious risk of being dramatically behind the times, something that MTV, by its very nature, abhors.

In the case of *Club Dead*, however, the crystal ball appears to have worked pretty well. This product resembles in no small part a futuristic version of MTV's show *Dead at 21*. In story, direction and the overall look and feel, the two projects are purposefully similar.

In *Club Dead*, the player takes the role of Sam Frost, Cyberplumber. It's a good thing for you—as Sam—that you have a unique aptitude for virtual-reality gear, because it landed you this first-rate, Mr. Fix-It job, and got you out of prison as well. You are also a recovering virtual-reality (or "V," as it's called in the game) addict. Not only do you get the occasional shakes from wanting a dose of cyberspace, you have some serious withdrawal symptoms. Mainly, you hallucinate frequently, and much of what seems to be going on

ARE YOU COOL ENOUGH? *MTV's Club Dead* takes players on a trip to the cyberchip Hotel Alexandria.

around you is purely in your imagination.

So, tired and experiencing flashbacks, you arrive at the Hotel Alexandria. You've been smuggled out of prison to meet with the top brass at Metacorp, the company that runs the Alexandria. The hotel is an extremely posh resort for the hippest of the hip, the richest of the rich. You not only have to know someone to get in, you have to be someone as well.

For the ultra-elite in the cadre of Metacorp, the Alexandria is the safest place for a little illicit "V." But the VR chambers, similar to *Star Trek* holodecks, are acting up. Normally, they'd simply hire a regular mechanic on the sly, but this job requires the best "Plumber" in the "V" business— and someone they can count on not to talk. You see, the clients have started turning up dead in the VR chambers. And you need to figure out exactly what's going on.

So you have been given four days to figure out exactly what's happening, and you've only got your smarts and the clues you fall over to get you out alive. There are a lot of fingers pointing at you—some are merely accusatory fingers, others grip weaponry.

As you might expect, *Club Dead* is to CD-ROM gaming what MTV is to television. Authority figures get regularly bashed and hip people are always bopping about. Witness the amazingly anal-retentive security chief with his pet equalizer, Sparky. Witness Sam's success as he does the obvious MTV thing and goes against said authority. There isn't any actual sex or nudity, but like the typical heavy metal video, there's some hinting, some innuendo and a couple of serious suggestions. Unlike MTV, there is some pretty serious violence. VNM has voluntarily rated the game "Mature," recommending that it only be played by gamers 17 and older and putting a sizable "realistic violence" tag on the box. Prepare yourself for a lot of imagery flashing across the screen in no apparent order and for no apparent reason—remember, this is an MTV product, and random images are the network's one enduring standard.

In the never-ending quest to present the same thing in a different way, VNM offers a series of extreme and mildly disorienting camera angles. Worm's eye view, eagle's eye view and in-your-face close-ups are the norm, diluting the impact after a few minutes. While this might be attractive to younger gamers, for many it will merely be aggravating. The camera angles occasionally make it very difficult to tell what is going on. Parts of the video clips are easy to miss, because it can be difficult to discern what is happening and what part of the film clip is important.

MTV's Club Dead ultimately fails because, in essence, it is a viewer's game rather than a player's game. Many of the old ICOM products had the same problem, *Dracula Unleashed* in particular. The world in which the game unfolds has its own agenda. What this means is that each action takes up a certain amount of time in the game. Events in the game—meetings between some of the characters, conversations and clues, take place at specific times.

For instance, the player can learn early in the game about a particular rendezvous scheduled to take place in the public bathrooms on one of the floors of the hotel. If the player goes to the bathroom at that time, the conversation that ensues will inform the player of a number of important future events. However, should the player arrive at the bathroom five minutes late, no soap. You snooze, you lose. True, this is realistic, but from a gameplay standpoint, the game itself suffers because of this strict adherence to the reality of the clock. You've got to be in the right place at the right time all the time to win. Miss once, and your Cyberplumber career goes down the drain.

If you can play under these constraints and don't mind the rapid-fire incoherence of the imagery, you might have a good time at *Club Dead*. The video quality is very good, and it is evident that VNM put both money and effort into the product. In terms of actual game-play quality, however, *Club Dead* falls short.—*Steve Honeywell*

Club Dead offers a series of wild images and wacky graphics

Meetings between various characters can offer valuable clues

Random images and video clips keep the action chaotically cool

An ultrahip denizen of the swanky virtual Hotel Alexandria

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